

Artisans and Musicians Dutch and American *Pella, Iowa 1854-1960*



James E. McMillan
editor

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*Prepared for the Pella Sesquicentennial by the
Pella Historical Society, 1997*

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Artists and Musicians
Dutch and American
Pels 1854-1859

James E. Morrison
ed.

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Dedicated to Georg Heeren
May 15, 1914 - July 24, 1997

Editor's Preface

It has been a great pleasure to intersect with local Pella history for the town sesquicentennial, not only in preparing my own study of the Cox brothers, but also in promoting the work of Central College student Camille Sharp on Georg Heeren, Jr. and in resurrecting the honors work of former Central student Kathleen Vanden Oever. In 1981, Kathleen, then Goldzung, wrote her study of Schilder Nollen under the supervision of current Professor Emeritus Lawrence Mills.

Murray and Tom Cox, born Ohioans, but raised Pellans represented the American contribution to the growth of the prairie town founded by Dutch emigrant settlers in 1847 under the leadership of Dominie H.P. Scholte. So too did Gerhard "Schilder" Nollen and Georg Heeren, Jr., with their productive lives, illustrate the continuum of Dutch artistic culture from the early days of pioneering until the modern years of America at mid-twentieth century. From Nollen's arrival from Holland in 1854 until Heeren's death in 1960, with seventy-five years of the Cox brothers in between, Pella grew from a small Dutch enclave to a dynamic town of business, industrial, educational, and agricultural endowment, while at the same time, in the spirit of its forbears, maintaining a cultural ambiance appealing to tens of thousand of annual tourists.

For a brief period in 1900-1901, these four artistic men strode the same sidewalks of town and paths of Garden Square. Old and in ill health, Schilder Nollen still painted as Georg Heeren commenced his community endeavors as a woodworker, while Murray and Tom Cox made music in their spare time from running the local hotel and the railroad. Perhaps they spoke a time or two together about the warp and the weave of the Dutch-American fabric that they and so many others had skillfully woven on the prairie of Iowa.

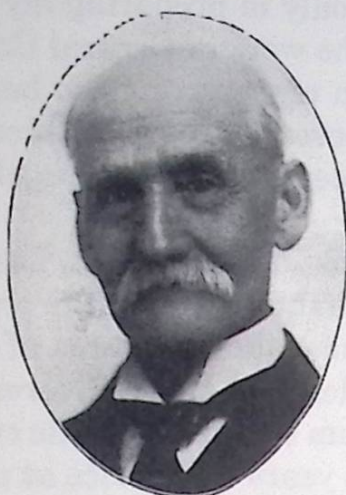
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Along with the authors Camille and Kathleen, the editor wishes to thank the Education Committee of the Pella Historical Society which, along with the town's sesquicentennial committee, made this project possible. My appreciation also to Mary Roozeboom of Rose Tree Photography who assisted on the photographs and design and, also to Pella Printing, particularly Kristina Gray, for bringing the project to prompt finish at short notice. Funding for the work has been provided by the Memorial Fund of Emily Darrow Mayo.

James E. McMillan
Editor
August 1997

PROGRAM

Dedication of
Band Stand
and
City Parks



Thursday,
Sept. 28, 1922
PELLA, IOWA

Capt. James Murray Cox
(In whose honor the Band Stand was erected.)

President of the Day—Mayor H. J. Vanden Berg

1:30 p. m.—Chorus—600 School children, Miss Willa Throckmorton, Dir.
Band Concert—Central Park—Pella Junior Band, R. Clayton Crawford, Dr.
Invocation.....Rev. J. De Haan
Selection.....Double Male Quartette
Dedicatory Address.....Pres. M. J. Hoffman, of Central College
Response by.....Capt. James Murray Cox
Acceptance in behalf of the city.....A. C. Kuyper, City Clerk
Address—"Civic Pride".....Hon. W. G. Vander Ploeg
Presentation of awards in property improvement contest.
Selection.....Double Male Quartette
Closing Prayer.....Dean H. W. Pietenpol

3:00 p. m.—Demonstration by Boy Scouts in Band Stand, Wm. F. Brunia,
Scoutmaster.

3:15 p. m.—Tug of War—Business men north of Franklin street vs. the
Southside.

Sports.....	North Side of Square		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Boys Race, under sixteen	\$1.50	\$1.00	\$.50
Girls race under sixteen	1.50	1.00	.50
Apple eating contest	1.00	.75	.50
Cracker eating contest	1.00	.75	.50
Fat Man's race (250lbs or over)	1.50	1.50	.50
Relay race, 3 boys on each team	\$3.00 to winners		
Three legged race (2 boys)	3.00	2.00	

4:00 p. m.—Ball Game.....Central College Athletic Field
7:00 p. m.—Band Concert—Pella Band,George Ramsey, Director
Selection—Mixed Chorus.....Mrs. T. H. Liggett, Director
Community Singing.....Led by George Francis Sadler
Band Concert.....Pella Band

TOM AND MURRAY COX: PELLA'S MUSIC MEN, 1855-1925

by James E. McMillan

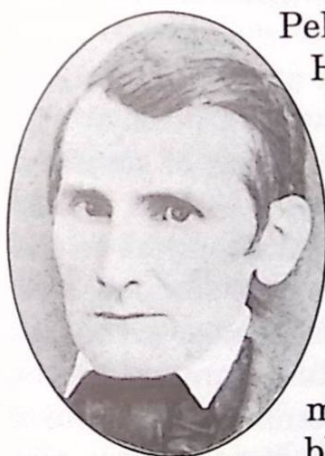
Historian Cyrenus Cole once wrote of the origins of his hometown Pella, Iowa, reflecting on "long nights with the solemn, brooding silence broken only by the wild howl of the wolves, the blood-curdling scream of the panther, or the death cry of a stricken deer, the first band concert ever heard by a white person in Garden Square." These beautiful but foreboding sounds of nature were soon supplanted by a far different and more congenial music in Pella's central square, that of marching bands and musicians attuned to rhythms and melodies emanating from the martial past of the Civil War.¹

The state of Iowa has long maintained a deep appreciation and tradition of quality marching bands in its past cultural and community history. One need only look to the marching band accomplishments and compositions of Karl King or the Mason City inspiration for the long enduring musical *The Music Man* written by native Meridith Wilson. The fictive "River City" experience has been common to many Iowa prairie towns since their nineteenth-century beginnings and continues today. Town elders, businessmen, farmers, husbands, wives, and children gather to enjoy and participate in the musical band experience around bandshells, in front of outdoor stages, and watching marches on high school football fields, through village streets, and around town squares. The colorful town of Pella in Marion County strongly continues these traditions today through the nationally recognized Pella High School Marching Dutch, the state champion high school jazz band, the Pella City Band, the Community Orchestra, and various other community and Central College vocal and orchestral combinations. The music tradition thrives in Pella and can be traced back, in large part, to the organizing, playing, and directing efforts of long term residents, Murray and Tom Cox, Pella's original music men.

The Cox brothers were both born in Fulton County in northwest Ohio, J. Murray (March 23, 1845) preceding Tom (July 21, 1849) by four years. With their parents William and Charity and older brothers, John, Joshua, and Jacob, and elder sister, Rachel, they moved to

Pella in 1855, eight years after the arrival of H. P. Scholte's Dutch settlers and the initial stabilizing and rapid growth of the community. Over the next five years, while the parents ran the Franklin Hotel, their sons attended the Pella public schools and helped out around the hostelry.²

The outbreak of the Civil War dramatically ended all aspects of youthful bliss for these brothers, however, including the youngest two, as all soon were



William Cox



Charity Cox

thrown into the harsh adult reality of wartime. Out of the caldron of war would emerge Murray and Tom's dedication to martial and marching music.

One by one the brothers (and their sister's husband, John Russell) enlisted for the Union, Murray joining Company G of the Seventeenth Iowa Volunteers as a drummer of sixteen years age in 1862. This left only twelve-year-old Tom in Pella with his parents. The young boy's civilian status did not last for long, however. Contradictory stories exist about young Tommy's enlisting. According to one source, a Union officer staying at the Franklin Hotel noticed the young boy imitating older brother Murray at playing the drum. He offered to take Tommy south with him as a drummer boy but had some trouble convincing Mother Charity at first. Not until the officer promised to care for Tommy as his own son and return him immediately if any homesickness ensued did she reluctantly give permission. Still she felt he would "be better playing with toy soldiers instead of riding off to war."³

The second and less likely story was related to the *Pella Chronicle* in 1939 by Dick Rhynsbarger, who claimed his father Cornelis, an 1855 emigrant from Holland, said that he and Tommy Cox had "ran off to find their relatives" fighting in the war and had then tried to sign on. Cornelis, at twelve was rejected as too young, while Tommy at "fourteen" was accepted. Actually, records indicate that Thomas W. Cox, musician, enlisted in Company G, Thirty-third Iowa Infantry on September 4, 1862, making him thirteen years old.⁴

Brother Murray was already in by then, having been mustered into service with older brother John and the Seventeenth Iowa at Keokuk on April 16, 1862. Just days before, the carnage at Shiloh had indicated the immeasurable severity of the war, even if ending in Union victory. Within a month and after only a smattering of field training, the Seventeenth deployed at the front in northern Mississippi. Placed under the command of Major General William S. Rosecrans, the regiment joined in pressuring General P.G.T. Beauregard's Confederates after their defeat at Shiloh. Murray drummed his way through the successful siege of Corinth which was occupied on May 30. After a brief pursuit of the evacuating enemy, the regiment returned to Corinth for a summer of much needed training. Here Murray tapped out assembly and drill cadences and wake up and sleep calls for weeks on end. It is probable that he was very popular with his comrades in arms as was usually the case with the younger drummer boys.⁵

Murray and the Seventeenth Iowa first saw action at an unfortunate engagement on September 19 at Iuka where the regiment was "unjustly" criticized by General Rosecrans for a "luckless disaster . . . the result of someone else's blunder." The regimental commander was disabled and the senior captain severely wounded when the regiment became split and subject to the fire of both Confederate and Union troops. Forced to withdraw temporarily, the regimental lines eventually stabilized and the Confederates withdrew from the field, leaving the Union army victorious. Rosecrans was not impressed by the performance and although the brigade commander wrote a commendable report of the Seventeenth's action under dire straits, the

commanding general issued a "severe reprimand." This first blooding of the Iowa boys left three dead, thirty-eight wounded, and four missing.

The Seventeenth righted itself two weeks later at the Battle of Corinth, Murray's own Company G capturing the flag of the Fortieth Mississippi while the regiment sustained twenty-five casualties. This time Rosecrans commended the Seventeenth in words that ameliorated somewhat his previous censure, stating the regiment had "amply atoned for the misfortune at Iuka.... Long may they wear with unceasing brightness the honors they have won."

After these harsh and glorious indoctrinations to war, the regiment settled down under General Ulysses S. Grant, to the demanding and time-consuming logistics of the siege of Vicksburg, the key to control of the Mississippi and in many respects the winning of the war. During the ensuing months the regiment experienced "great suffering on account of insufficient rations and forced marches." Twofold tragedy resulted for the Cox brothers in December at Holly Springs, Mississippi. First older brother John succumbed to the hardship at age twenty, dying of disease on the 8th. Then on the 20th, General Earl Van Dorn's rebels swept down in a surprise attack capturing Murray. Fortunately, he was paroled after a brief period in a detainment camp and, forbidden to serve under terms of the parole, he presumably returned home to Pella until re-enlisting in the Spring of 1864.

While Murray recuperated from nine months of war, the regiment distinguished itself through the subsequent weeks of the Vicksburg campaign fighting at Raymond, Jackson, Champion's Hill and the siege lines of Vicksburg itself. Proudly the Iowa soldiers marched into the defeated city when the key to the Mississippi capitulated on July 4, 1863, one day after Lee's defeat at Gettysburg. The tide had irrevocably turned.

In September 1863, the Seventeenth went under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman and fought gallantly during the November conquest of Chattanooga, Tennessee, particularly in the charge up Missionary Ridge. The Iowans then probed further south along the rail lines to Atlanta. Here Murray rejoined his comrades in April 1864, the terms of his parole having been fulfilled.

Much warring remained to be done and Murray drummed in the thick of it, even being promoted to principal musician. At eighteen and somewhat older than fellow drummers he now took their charge in fashioning them into a marching group including horns as well, marking his first experience at directing musicians. He marched his way through Alabama and on into Georgia, where, at Tilton, on October 13, 1864, military lightning struck for a second time as it had at Holly Springs. The regiment held a section of the railroad to Atlanta centering on a blockhouse in which seventy men were positioned. The remaining 210 including Murray occupied surrounding trenches with the exception of Company G then on picket duty. Suddenly, rebels arrived in great force and the beleaguered regiment now confronted as many as "13,000 men" under Confederate corps commander, Lt. General Alexander P. Stewart.

The Confederate leader proffered a flag of truce with the ominous

instructions to surrender or "no quarter would be given." The regimental commander, Colonel S. M. Archer (the captain wounded two years earlier at Iuka), would have none of that, replying "If you want me and my men, come and take us." A bombardment by eleven cannon of twelve and thirty-two pound weight ensued while 5,000 southern soldiers prepared to force the issue if necessary. Stewart did allow the artillery time to do its work, and after seven hours of fire, the blockhouse was ready to collapse in flames upon its beleaguered defenders. Archer then recognized the possibility of slaughter and surrendered. Stewart complained of the wasted time and inconvenience of losing a day's march, while Archer cordially reminded him of his responsibility to do just such inconveniencing. Only thirty-one men escaped, mostly those on the picket line, ironically Murray's Company G, but he was with the main detachment and bore their misfortune. Three hundred and one men of the Seventeenth Iowa were made prisoners of war. For the second time, Murray Cox now experienced this fate, and this time he was not fortunate enough to get quickly paroled but was shipped off to the bane of northern prisoners, Andersonville.

Murray spent, seven and one-half long months incarcerated at Andersonville where he endured the many hardships of imprisonment, notably shortage of food and healthy activity for body and mind. As a sturdy youth, he had an advantage over many who perished there, and he endured. Too, he possessed other advantages than his youthful vigor. He and his bandmates were often asked to perform for their jailers and thus were treated with a degree of pampering unavailable to others. In fact, on occasion, they accompanied prison officers out of the premises to provide music for local weddings and other social events. Imprisoned until the war's conclusion, Murray missed General William Tecumseh Sherman's triumphant march to the sea and victory through Georgia and the Carolinas. Murray also missed the meager remnant of the Seventeenth's participation in the grand victory parade in Washington, D.C., where the nation's capital experienced, at the same time, both joy over the war's successful conclusion and deep despair over the recent assassination of President Lincoln. The Seventeenth Iowa was then mustered out of service at Louisville, Kentucky, on July 25, 1865, many of the soldiers returning to their native Iowa through Davenport. Murray and those imprisoned had to await their return by a different route.

While Murray experienced the full complement of trials of war, his younger brother and drumming follower, Tom, engaged in similar conditioning to the west of the Great River, the Mississippi. Enlisting in September 1862, young Tom campaigned through Arkansas, participating in the capture of Little Rock in September 1863. After that region was secured, the Thirty-third Iowa leapt around to Mobile, Alabama, back to Little Rock followed by campaigns in Louisiana, a return to Alabama, and an excursion to Brazos Island in Texas before being mustered out in New Orleans in July 1865. Tom bore up under the pressures and evidently never did get homesick. He had some help too. On particularly long and harsh marches through swampy river bottomlands, he rode the backs of older soldiers. Given an opportunity to go



**"The Little Drummer Boy of
'62"**

**Tommy Cox
painted by Gerhard Nollen**

home on furlough, Tom had the privilege transferred to another comrade more desirous of a homecoming. Ultimately, in the summer of 1865, he did return home "well and hearty," having served for thirty-three months, exceeding his older brother's total of twenty-four, of which approximately eight had been spent in prison. Upon his mustering out in New Orleans, Tom still represented the little drummer boy as his papers describe him as "13 years of age, 4 feet 10 inches high, dark complexion, hazel eyes, auburn hair and by occupation when enrolled, a drummer." Actually, he was just four days short of sixteen and apparently very small for his age. The noted Pella artist Gerhard Nollen painted Tom upon his return (or departure) as "The Little Drummer Boy of '62," and the painting hangs

today in the Pella Historical Society.⁶

One further story further illustrates the anguish of parents in wartime. Charity and William Cox had already lost one son, John, at Holly Springs. While young Tom, now turning sixteen, made it back home intact, problems arose concerning Murray, who wrote that he would return to Pella by way of the Mississippi steamboat, the *Sultana*, which had been specifically earmarked for prisoner returns from the Deep South. In one of the great and totally useless tragedies of the war, the steamer blew up seven miles north of Memphis, killing 1,450 men, as many as had died in some of the major battles of the war (about 7,000 were killed in three days at Gettysburg, for example). While the Cox Family mourned the loss of yet another son, Charity continued her much saddened and compassionate visits to greet the trains filled with returning troops unloading at the newly-opened Pella depot. On one such evening, she stared with incredulity, then joy and thanksgiving as a familiar face disembarked on the platform. Indeed, it was her son, thought to have been lost and now found. Murray had returned to Pella and the family arms.

Fortune had smiled on Murray in a most fortuitous manner. When the *Sultana* was delayed on its voyage upriver, Murray, unencumbered from his prison ordeal and impatient to get home after his lengthy service, "begged" a captain of a smaller boat to allow him and his fellow musicians aboard. Permission was granted. Perhaps they played for their fare. In any case, they were spared. The town of Pella would indeed be fortunate to host the return of the twenty-year-old volunteer who would become one of its most constructive and honored citizens over the ensuing sixty years in both the business and social worlds and, of course, as the town music man.⁷

Pella welcomed its returning veterans with open arms but many did not return. Twenty Pellans sacrificed their lives. At nearby Central College, all but two disabled male students had enlisted. From this total of 122,

twenty-six, about one out of five perished. Many of these college boys were not native Pellans but were now indelibly linked with the adopted college town for time immemorial. Death had struck the Cox Family as well, but now the joyous parents and their grown-to-manhood sons looked forward to a constructive and peaceful future.⁸

* * *

Murray went right to work at the Pella station of the Des Moines Valley Railroad as an assistant telegrapher, commencing a forty-eight year career with the railroad, which had just arrived from the previous terminus Eddyville. While at the Pella depot, sixteen-year old Tom also would frequently join his older brother to offer some part-time help and learn telegraphing. Tom had enrolled at Central College but became so enamored of tapping the keys that he took it up as a career, quitting school and finding work in several Iowa towns before moving along to positions in South Dakota, Wyoming, and Texas. It would be several years before Tom permanently returned to Pella.⁹

The immediate postwar years were ones of transition for Murray as well. After working briefly in Pella, he went to Bonaparte in southeastern Iowa for four years as station agent, before spending a few years at the Prairie City-Monroe station. During this time, Murray married Luella Keables at Thayer, Kansas, on September 21, 1871. He then moved for a short time to the rail offices in Des Moines before returning, in 1874, to Pella, his beloved boyhood home and his home for the next half-century.

The Des Moines Valley Railroad was a significant operation in those years stretching from Keokuk along the river valley all the way to Fort Dodge. The Pella depot, too, was important being the shipping point for the whole of Marion County and much of Mahaska and Jasper Counties as well. No spurs existed yet and the mainline was the only rail in operation. As the Pella agent, Murray Cox coordinated shipping and pickups to county seat Knoxville, Pleasantville, Lynnvile, and other points as his name became familiar to countywide merchants and farmers. Passenger trains, too, chugged and puffed their way through Pella running twice each day, in both directions. Murray supervised it all and worked closely with fellow trainmen and patiently with younger trainees. Reminiscing in 1931, H. E. Wormhoudt recalled "with great pleasure my experience learning something of the railroad and telegraph business under the apt instruction of Mr. J. M. Cox, Mr. Tom W. Cox, and Mr. Ben Vierson." Recollecting also in a 1931 letter, W. H. Herbig of Kansas City remembered "the encouragement and patience I continually received from that good and kind-hearted friend Murray Cox, I hung on until I was able to master the keys...."¹⁰

While Murray became a fixture over the next four decades at the depot, it was in town and community affairs that he made his most visible mark as the Pella music man fashioning and guiding bands to statewide and even national recognition and performance. Younger brother Thomas, however, first took to music on the streets of Pella. The town's initial band formed shortly after the war's close as an all brass ensemble of ten or eleven men with

bass and “snap” drummers. The smaller “snap” drum appears to be the equivalent of today’s snare drum although a bit deeper, and it was the drum carried by Civil War drummer boys. Tom did not play this instrument, however; an early undated picture of “Pella’s First Band” lists Thomas as an alto horn player. Another sketch of the band mentions Tom as a soloist, so perhaps he was the lead player or first alto. Brother-in-law veteran John Russell is also pictured as an altoist.¹¹

These early musicians played “over-the shoulder” brass instruments with the valve part of the horn facing front and the bell component facing rearwards over the shoulder in order to be more audible to the following



Pella's First Band (late 1860s)
Tom Cox, front row, second to left of bass drum

marching soldiers, although there were, of course, no soldiers following in this band. The first Pella band did not feature sophisticated uniforms but maintained the ambience of military style with dark civilian suits that resembled formal Union Army officers' uniforms. References to the band are undated, but it is likely that this organization played in the late 1860s before Tom Cox had left for railroad work in other states and after Murray had left town for early telegraph positions in other parts of Iowa, so Murray was not a member of this first musical effort.

Oldtimer C.M. Moore writing later for the *Pella Chronicle* evoked Lord Byron to festoon his memories of Pella's first band:

“A tooter who tooted the flute,
 Tried to tutor two tooters to toot;
 Said they to the tooter,
 ‘Is it easier to toot, or
 To tutor two tooters to toot?’”

His home lay within “tooting distance” and he and other youngsters in the

community enjoyed the practices, marches, and seated programs of "a quick step, a Dutch schottische and 'Bonnie Eloise, the Belle of the Mohawk Vale.'" ¹²

When Murray transferred from Des Moines back to the Pella rail depot, he intended to settle permanently in the town and throw himself into community activities, particularly in his own area of expertise, music. In 1874, the year of his return, he began playing with the old and planning for the new and by 1881, he had assembled Pella's second musical combination, known as Cox's Light Infantry Band. Composed of twenty-one handsomely uniformed marching men, "all the members were skilled musicians and received wide acclaim" in Pella and the surrounding towns. Besides the

same two drums (though a real snare instead of a "snap") and the standard brass instruments (cornets and horns), the Light Infantry Band distinguished itself with the addition of reeds, including the now obsolete A flat clarinet, other clarinets and flutes. Moreover, valve trombones were introduced to the brass for the



The Light Infantry Band (early 1880s)
Murray Cox, back row, left

first time. "Captain" Cox led the ensemble as drum major/director, and his men appeared martial and striking. Their uniforms featured tight-fitting single-stripped pants, dark vests, and waist length tight jackets adorned with three rows of brass buttons, filagreed with a breast garland and shoulder epaulets — all topped off by a French style kepi cap with ornamental band. ¹³

A November 20, 1882 program exists of a band appearance with "Miss Mary B. Cope, Elocutionist and Dramatic Reader." Between readings of poems, fables, and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and "European Guides," the Light Infantry Band played a Michaelis march, waltzes by Walteufel, a Suppe serenade, duets for flutes and cornets by Koenig, a schottische, and the hymn "Rock of Ages." ¹⁴

As Murray Cox worked to improve and fine tune his band, he did not restrict himself to these musical endeavors alone. "The patron saint of music in Pella" also encouraged and sponsored orchestral development emphasizing strings and piano. He brought in a violin teacher who drew numerous students over the years and formed the Cox Trio and an eight piece orchestra, both featuring his sons Henry on violin and Murray A. on

cornet, while daughter Carrie played piano in the trio. His own playing expanded in both instrumentation and technique as the following description testifies:

J.M. Cox was such a poetic performer on guitar, as we like to think Schubert must have been. He did not indulge in virtuosity, which he certainly could have attained, but expressed himself in marvelously rich chordal sequences and beautiful melodic interweaving. He possessed an astonishing talent for, and facility upon, the piano, an instrument probably never studied in a rigid technical sense. He improvised charmingly and was the greatest drummer this writer ever heard during a very long career in the art of music.¹⁵

Indeed, in days gone by, Murray had employed his guitar to woo Luella Keables on visits to her parents' homes in both Thayer, Kansas, and Pella. Impressed with the ambitious, talented, and handsome veteran, Dr. Henry Keables and his wife often invited neighbors to join them in Cox-inspired musical soirees. Murray's musical courting succeeded, and after their 1871 Kansas marriage, Luella stood by his side for all of his years of music making.

Luella (Keables) Cox had been born September 16, 1848, in Flowerfield, Michigan, moving to Pella with her parents at age four in 1852. After three years in California where her father practiced in Sacramento, she returned to Pella. Then, in 1857, her mother Caroline died, and the nine year old moved back to Michigan to live with an aunt. It is probable that she at least became acquainted with young Murray Cox, three years her senior, during 1855-57, the years they shared together as children in Pella. Soon after the Civil War, Luella moved again, splitting time between her father's Kansas home and Pella where she enrolled as a student in Central College. Here she undoubtedly got to know Tom Cox. Central College then was associated with the Baptist Church and maintained a strong Christian tradition. It is notable that at this time, Luella "was converted at a girls meeting held in Old Central and immediately united with the Baptist Church, her immersion taking place in the Des Moines River," which flowed a couple miles outside the town limits. Murray joined the church as well and the two contributed much to church activity and life over the ensuing decades. Prior to her marriage, Luella taught at the Buzzards Roost School on Whitebreast Creek between Pella and Knoxville.¹⁶

The Cox's set up their home at 215 Main Street purchasing a large, commodious house in 1874



Home of J. M. Cox

that had been built only a few years earlier. Perfectly located, the home sat just a block away from the Pella depot which Murray supervised.¹⁷ Here all six of Murray and Luella's children were born, William dying in infancy. The others included three daughters, Carrie, Libbie, and Hattie and the two sons, Murray A. and Henry, all of whom carried on the family music tradition. Hattie and Carrie gave private piano lessons, while Murray and Henry joined up with their father's bands. Assuredly Libbie contributed musically in some fashion. While Henry eventually went on to a lengthy and acclaimed musical career as player and educator, Murray's life was cut short as he succumbed to a typhoid epidemic at age twenty-four. Reverend W. R. Yard of Marshalltown later recalled that at Central College "we students had to turn nurses occasionally. I remember especially how we tried to nurse Eugene Catlin and Murray Cox through stages of typhoid fever, succeeding in the former case but unfortunately failing in the latter, which saddened us all." Yard also recalled that two Central teachers, Dr. and Mrs. Stoddard were "a source of constant inspiration to us all.... Then Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Cox were a great help to all of us too...."¹⁸



Albert Hobbs Post
Murray Cox, top left

Murray Cox's Pella activities extended beyond family, railroad, and music in other ways too. He maintained an active role in the Grand Army of the Republic Albert Hobbs Post and commanded the local unit of the national guard. As a noted military veteran and music man, Murray was prominent at local patriotic celebrations like the Fourth of July and GAR reunions. Moreover, he excelled not just as a director of marching bands but also could weave spellbinding war stories about Andersonville and his campaigns. Murray was no slouch on the speaker's stand either. A former Pellan recalled:

Those days were great events and the public square was filled with people to witness the patriotic stunts pulled off each year. The stump speeches were eagerly listened to, and I can recall one when the speaker, Mr. Cox...out did Billy Sunday in his girations [sic] to impress the patriotic spirit upon his audience, and the umbrella he used to emphasize his remarks was torn to shreds by his repeated beatings on the table to give force to his remarks.¹⁹

On another memorable occasion in the late 1870s, Murray put to good use his military and leadership training in a rather violent incident on the

streets of Pella, the "whiskey riot." At the time, two saloons and one drug store in town "sold large quantities of booze... largely responsible for the many drunk men to be found day and night on its streets." Churches always far outnumbered drinking establishments in Pella, however, and reflecting national and rural trends, there existed a strong sentiment against "booze" in the town. The saloonkeepers were well aware of this sentiment.²⁰

Spurred on by local temperance women, the town marshall, "A. Lee," issued a search warrant with the intention of closing a bar run by one "Maasdam." The irate bartender/owner tore the warrant from the marshall's hands and struck him with an oak pump handle, presumably from the kegs on tap, knocking him out, inflicting a deep gash, and ejecting him into the street. A "posse" of Pellans now gathered with a second warrant and were faced down by "a large contingent of ruffians gathered... to resist all legal procedures." Armed, they drove back the townsmen who called upon the mayor. That worthy declared he was powerless and would not act. Then the deputy-sheriff demurred: "I cannot quell a mob." While some of the ruffians snuck out three wagon loads of whiskey through the back door to be hidden in the country, other members of "the mob" took to the streets armed with "huge clubs." With these they began to attack good citizens known to be "friends of the law." The victims included S. B. Fairbanks and Pella Superintendent of Schools C. C. Cory who were sitting in front of a nearby grocery store "quietly discussing daily events." One "Ulrich" struck at Fairbanks but the blow was deflected by an open window; he then chased Corey into the grocery store where the beleaguered professor defended himself with a cheese knife.

At this point, attorney Thomas Ryan, "friend of the law" grabbed the same and with the code in his hands raced to the dental offices of W. H. H. Barker, second in command of the local militia. Barker immediately raced the mile down Main Street to the Pella depot to get Captain Cox who issued the order to call out the guard. In the space of an hour, twenty-five men and their Springfield rifles were assembled. Murray Cox sized up the situation and issued them ten rounds "of death dealing ball cartridges each." He then directed a "quiet march" to the town's central Garden Square.

Entering the square at a muffled pace, the group wheeled right down Franklin Street and faced the frontage of the saloon. A "rabble of about three-hundred rioters" had gathered behind the militia "fully expecting the Guard to come on the field with empty guns and they counted on an easy victory." At this point, Captain Cox took aggressive charge. A young boy, Ralf A. Baker, later recalled what ensued:

Our militia company, of which we were very proud was called out because of 'Saloon Trouble' down the street across from the American Hotel. Capt. Cox and Lieut. Barker led these men down the street in front of the saloon - faced them toward the building, gave orders to load with real shot and shell. I thought we were ready for another Civil War but the saloon keeper had recovered from his fighting spirit and the trouble was over but I, like every other boy, enjoyed it while things were moving.

After Murray Cox's "load your pieces" order, "there was a sudden change in the ranks of the lawbreakers and most of them fled in wild confusion and were seen no more." Cox then demanded the saloon door be thrown open, but upon entering was greeted by only an empty room, the patrons and the whiskey having disappeared.

The after effects of the "whiskey riot" were longlasting, and it is assured that Murray Cox endured them, although there exists no specific accounting. A psychological unrest tormented the town, and "enemies of law and order" formed an organization that proclaimed that never again would the local guard "gather for drill on the streets of town," or "yeoman from far and wide would be on hand armed with pitchfork, scythes, and any other weapons that could cause the flow of blood." Cox, Barker, and company were not rattled, and the following week at the appointed time, the militia "drilled in the usual way and manner, save that the breech loading rifles would be ready to make corpses of anyone attempting to interfere. This put a quietus on the intended raid."

Still, harassment of the anti-whiskey contingent continued for a long time. "Private individuals were ostracized and threatened with death or mayhem" including the attorney who had catalyzed the repression. For six weeks he carried a loaded pistol to work and finally he left town, as did the marshall who originally served the warrant at the expense of a physical beating. Certainly Cox had to face such derision as well, but as a community stalwart, he emerged vindicated and upheld:

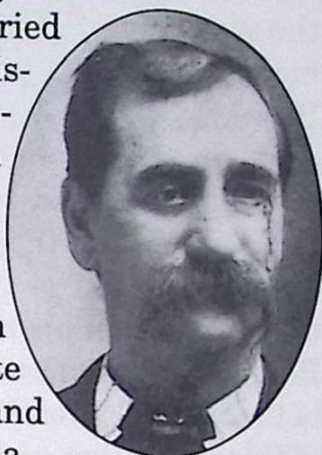
...in the end, it brought about a most remarkable revolution in the sentiments of the majority of the entire community. With the change of that sentiment went the closing of the saloons and the handling of strong drink in the drug trade. Drunkenness and drunk men disappeared from the City of Pella almost as if by magic, and it can now boast of its reputation as a temperate, law-abiding municipality.

Murray's interest in music, militia, and marching did not detract from his major role as supervisor of the Pella rail depot, and here too his reputation for proficiency and cordial demeanor grew as the many years passed by. Although rail had reached Knoxville by 1875 cutting into Pella's dominance in the area, Pella remained a busy station point. For six months in 1879, the depot checked through 146 cars of hogs (down from 476 cars for the year 1873), 31 cars of cattle (down from 143 in 1873), and carloads of potatoes (183), oats (167), wheat (53), butter and eggs (40), corn (35), household goods (20), rock (17), and merchandise (12). As a "division point" on the road, Murray sped away goods to New York one way and Denver the other as he had "entire charge of the force of office men, yard men, engine men and all others working...." Daily passenger trains, too, increased from two to three, disgorging passengers, many among whom frequented the past and future Cox Family interest, the hotel located on Franklin Street.²¹

Shortly after their arrival in 1855, Murray's parents had first taken

over the original hotel in Pella, called at times the Franklin after the street on which it located and the American, perhaps after the patriotism of the Civil War era. References to its existence go as far back as an 1848 tornado, the year after the first major Dutch emigration to Iowa under Dominie H.P. Scholte, so the Cox Family was not the original builder or owner. In fact, the Nossaman Family ran it from 1851 to 1855. In 1862 and from this hotel, Thomas had been eagerly cajoled into joining the Union Army. After the death of William in 1865 and Charity in 1872, the business was purchased by Cornelius Bongers.²²

Tom Cox became the main operative of the American House after his second return to Pella (third including the war) as his life and work had taken him to far distances in the United States. After his original telegraph training with brother Murray at the Pella depot, he was assigned the station at Beacon near Oskaloosa. Here in 1869, he married Clara Boling before moving to Ottumwa and working as dispatcher for the "Western Newspaper Union." Health problems had evolved for Tom, however. Even though just in his early twenties, he experienced "hemorrhages of the lungs," perhaps brought on by his war campaigns in the swampy river deltas of the South. Advised to go to California for health reasons, he wound up instead in Laramie, Wyoming, "finding a ready job and the climate there agreeing with him." Footloose and/or homesick, he and Clara returned to Pella, however, around 1880 to open a cigar store for a while before Tom went back to work with Murray at the Pella Depot.²³



Thomas W. Cox

That same year, Clara Cox died and Tom accepted a transfer from his saddened home to Houston, Texas, where he operated the telegraph until an 1882 transfer back to Afton, in southwest Iowa. Here, he married Betsy Hayward and entered the milling business with a brother-in-law. Tom, however, continued to experience the wanderlust that did not characterize his brother Murray, moving along to farming in Hughes County of central South Dakota bordering the Missouri River. Then, in 1885, he returned to Iowa and the railroad telegraph in Eldon, Creston, and Des Moines. Finally, he came back to Pella sometime in the 1890s to work again with Murray at the depot.

During this quarter-century since the war, Tom had a hard time settling down in terms of location and occupation and in terms of health. Problems continued to hound him until he felt the necessity to retire from the railroad-telegraph business at the age of fifty. The local paper wrote on his retirement: "The old railroad man... has done almost everything from throwing a switch to waiting on the swell officials in their palace coach, and can tell as many railroad stories as any man in Iowa. He is not railroading any more. ...[but is] trying to settle down as a millionaire landlord, and says all he lacks is the millions."²⁴ At this time it is likely that brother Murray infused a degree of comfort and stability in Tom's life as the two resurrected the old family hotel business. On March 19, 1900, Tom and Murray, in partnership,

purchased from Mrs. Bongers the hotel on Franklin Street. It was not the same structure that had been run by the Cox parents in the 1850s and 1860s, that building having burned down in the fire of July 1872, and having been replaced by a similar wooden structure. Tom, with Betsy Cox as a busy manager, ran the operation for another two years before replacing the second wooden building with a modern three story edifice of brick just to the east. Costing \$15,000 at the time, this is the building that remains standing today in 1997.

The American House proved a bustling business and showcased a grand staircase, ornate fireplaces, a beautifully curved upper staircase, large sitting rooms, a spacious lobby, and of course a fine restaurant. The hostelry catered to businessmen coming to Pella by rail to ply their goods during the week and served townspeople and farmers from the hinterland with meals on the weekend. No written menu existed, but Betsy would cross the street each morning to shop for the best food bargains in terms of freshness and price. Breakfasts included fruits, hot and cold cereals, bacon, sausage, and ham with eggs and wheatcakes. At noon, "dinner" served often by Central College students featured soup, roast pork and beef, fish and chicken, various salads and vegetables, topped by pies and strawberry shortcake. A "lighter" evening meal consisted of beefsteak and porkchops served with potatoes, creamed corn, macaroni, and biscuits, all evened out with pudding, cake, and fruit. Rooms went for two dollars, and all meals cost sixty cents, and on Sunday, before the days of Pella "blue laws," the restaurant accommodated as many as 200 locals. Tom and Betsy lived at the hotel and were often joined by Murray and Luella, who in their older age appreciated the comforts and convenience in town and also maintained rooms at the hotel as well as their Main Street home.

* * *

Throughout these late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century years, Murray continued his role not only as the pivot figure of the family but also as a city father rivaling those patriarchs of the oldest Dutch families. Music remained his passion providing relaxation from the railroad and later the hotel business as well as facilitating his civic contribution.

The "patron saint of music in Pella" continually upgraded his Light Infantry Band integrating the finest musicians into the orchestra. Among others, he brought in as clarinetists the Luyben bothers who had been members of the King's Band of the Netherlands. Also as assistant director and arranger/composer, T. B. Boyer became known as a "minor genius" in Pella. Too, Murray encouraged and arranged the services of Will Kenney of Illinois, "a phenomenal clarinetist," and P. K. Matus, "a truly transcendental performer and severe taskmaster" whose former band director had issued a "\$5,000 challenge to every clarinetist in the world."²⁵

Murray was not the type to brag or offer challenges on behalf of his musicians, but undoubtedly his eyes lit up with great pride at another important source of musicianship as his bands evolved, his own sons Murray Alonzo, called Murray A., and at four years younger, the precocious Henry.

Henry, in his personal memoirs recalled his father's admonition to his children: "I am not concerned with the honorable vocation by which you earn your living, but I intend to see that you know how to enjoy the living you have earned. The surest way is by the performance of great concerted instrumental music." Henry on violin, Murray A. on cornet, and younger sister Carrie on piano formed the Cox Trio under the tutelage of their father, and as youthful classicists "did a lot of trooping from Council Bluffs, Iowa to Marshall, Michigan." They grew up with Murray Cox's bands and eventually would play prominent roles in them.²⁶



Cox's C. R. I. & P. Band (1892)

In the early 1890s, Murray Cox erected his most formidable musical edifice, Pella's third band, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railway Band named after the changing nomenclature of the railroad through Pella. No longer the Des Moines Valley Railroad, it was still served by a loyal Captain Cox. This upgraded rendition of the Light Infantry group was informally known simply as Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band, and it went on to the greatest recognition of any comparable musical organization in the State of Iowa. With many of the excellent musicians from his earlier outfits, Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band marched and performed to increasingly large crowds drawn from the community and elsewhere as its reputation grew. In 1881, a double-tiered, cupola-domed bandstand had been erected in the center of Garden Square, Pella's central congregating point. Often used in the past as a stage for two different musical organizations in concert, Murray Cox now had enough musicians to fill both tiers, as size eventually provided one of the major differences with the former Light Infantry Band. Also, the C.R.I. & P. Band performed more in concert than marching setting although it could snap and drill with the very best when called upon, as it often was, and from frequently more distant places. Uniforms also changed, becoming more spectacular, colorful, and innovative as the following quote asserts:

The Pella Band, according to records, was the first American band to be attired in truly gorgeous uniforms: old gold, double-breasted, long plush coats with triple gold-buttoned blue satin fronts, great single ostrich-feathered knight's chapeaux, white corduroy breeches with high patent-leather leggings... a marvelous appearance for a band.²⁷

With this C.R.I. & P. Band, Cox's sons began to have impact as they grew older. After studying music at nearby Central, the younger Henry attended Des Moines Musical College from 1894-97, graduating at age seventeen. Quickly recognized as something of a genius on violin, at five foot, ten inches, and 106 pounds, he was described as "dark and cadaverous." His father's friends referred to him non-contemptuously, but definitely contemporaneously as "Spook" and "Murray Cox's greaser." A music editor, upon hearing him, proclaimed: "Henry Cox is a genius; he is tall and thin, with coal-black eyes and hair, presenting an appearance not unlike Paganini. He plays with astonishing freedom, and technical difficulties are thrown off with an abandon that is almost bewildering." Henry, at the end of this particular performance that elicited the review, was offered an "extravagant fee" for a concert series and, in reply, indicated precociousness in other areas as well: "I appreciate your offer, but I have no desire to become an ego-centric soloist. My first aspiration is to become as great and worthy a teacher as I can. Second, in my missionary zeal, to acquaint as many persons as I may with the vastly abundant life to be experienced in THE REALM OF ABSOLUTE MUSIC in which I dwell." Certainly, something and more of the father had rubbed off on his youngest son. But, as violin constituted a non-band instrument, Henry initially assisted his father more in directing, organizing, and administering to the band.²⁸

It was to his eldest, Murray A., however, that Captain Cox first handed his baton, relinquishing the role of drum major director to his son in the mid-1890s at about age fifty while continuing to oversee all band operations. Murray A. was described by his younger brother as a "nobly patient cornet prodigy," and "Christlike." Perhaps Murray A. was too patient and tolerant of others' musical and organizational shortcomings, for late in 1896 Henry replaced him at the baton. Obviously the father complied and, in fact, the change was made at the request of the "gently patient" Murray A. who continued to be the band's virtuoso cornet.

Henry described himself as one who "would be and was more of a martinet," again reflecting his father, Captain Cox's, military background and his own strict, classical music training in Des Moines. Under the leadership of the Captain and the drum major directing of sixteen-year-old Henry, complemented by the brilliant playing of Murray A., Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band reached the pinnacle of its musicianship, discipline, and popularity. Henry devised and enforced his own "stringent rules... as were in those days seldom imposed



Two of Pella's Band Boys

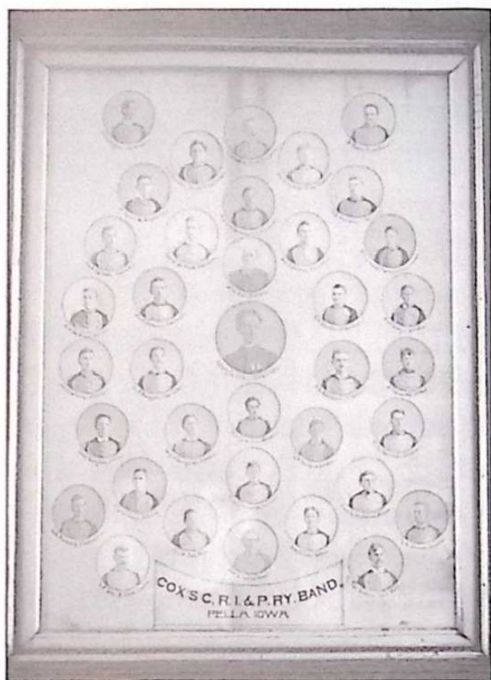
on professional bands, and were unprecedented in small-town bands." Henry's system included rehearsal time every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings allotted for the following specific areas: "adequate technical facility, pure intonation, flawless rhythm, beauty of tone, and attendance-total and punctual." He paid particular attention to his "beloved slow readers," and regularly held section rehearsals under his father's sage eye at the Cox home on Main Street.

An aged, sepia, multi-framed photograph of the time depicts the band's men, boys, and instruments, which included an expanded list nearly doubling the size of the old Light Infantry outfit: flute and piccolo, E flat clarinet, eight B flat clarinets, nine cornets, five altos, one euphonium, four trombones (including three of the newer slide variety, the first seen in Pella), a ballad horn, a snare drum, and a bass drum, along with Henry and the Captain. Moreover, the main bass drummer had three assistant bassists as that particular drum was a "monster bass... before the days of chariots... always carried by four men."²⁹

This comprised the outfit that, building on the reputation of Captain Cox and the prior Light Infantry Band, scaled new heights beginning with breaking attendance records under the bandshell in Garden Square to extending way beyond the state lines. The band competed with others as well as giving its own concerts and marching. An example of turn-of-century band competition is provided by the Iowa State Band Contest at the Ottumwa Fair of 1898 where the band prepared three major phases for critiquing. The first involved marching and counter-

marching while playing; the second, sight-reading of a standard overture not previously performed by the band; and third, a public performance of prepared compositions. Additionally, the judges numerically critiqued pitch, tone, rhythm, and expression, as well as character of prepared compositions and leadership. In this case, the Pella band won the first place award in the top category for all bands from cities/towns of 10,000 or over (Pella's population stood at about 3,000).

Judge-chairman C. M. Currier attempted to engage Henry to direct a national tour of an "All American Boys Band," but Henry



**Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band
(late 1890s)**



**Close Up of
J.M.,
Henry G., &
Murray A.
Cox**

demurred, being "more interested in deepening and broadening [his] musicianship." Henry's own report on the Ottumwa competition indicated, in typical verbosity, his complaints on the very high and victorious scores: "On

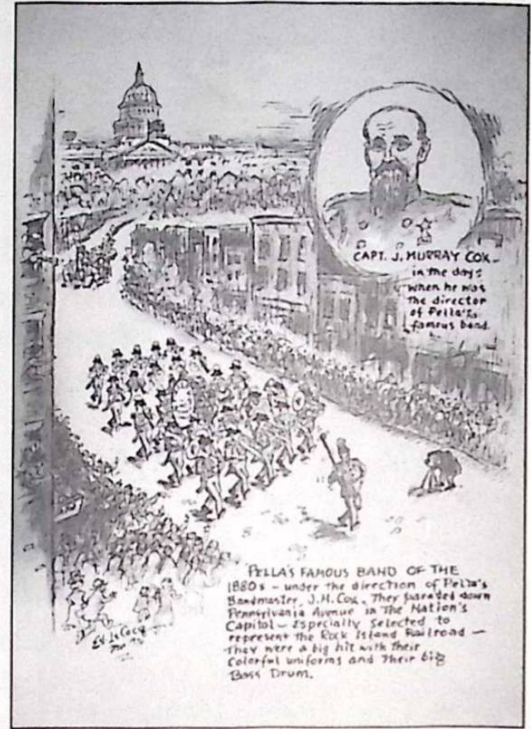
the whole, a much better rating was deserved. Egotistically, I believe that the judges just didn't wish to make the director more vain than he really is."³⁰

From such as Ottumwa, Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band played on to Iowa State Fairs, where it accompanied "the first American horseless carriage around the race track" and many political campaigns in state, assuredly supporting Republican candidates and proudly waving the flag of the GAR. From Iowa State Fairs, the band played on across the Missouri to Omaha's Corn Palace, down the Mississippi to the Republican national convention in St. Louis, up to the Great Lakes and Chicago for the 1896 World's Fair, and to top it off, to the inauguration of President William McKinley in 1897 in Washington, D.C. Here, as they marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, "they were a big hit with their colorful uniforms and Big Bass Drum." Traveling with an entourage of over forty, not including wives and supporters, necessitated logistics as precise as those on the marching fields, and Captain Cox administered to all patiently and skillfully.³¹

While the C.R.I. & P. Band's reputation grew well beyond the state boundaries, the band played at its proudest at home in Pella, performing for the weekly bandshell concert, civic affairs and holidays, and veterans reunions. The Forty-second Central College Commencement Ceremony on June 17, 1896, shows the musical versatility with the band playing "Plantation Echoes" and "The Silver Rhine Waltzes," while the Cox-infused orchestra played the "Lustspiel" and "Jolly Rogers" overtures, and Henry solo'd from De Beriot's "Violin Concerto No. 9."³²

Pellans' comments provide additional verification of the band's worth. One oldtimer recalled "Who would not be proud of Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band? Fun, Say Boy!... The country's best band playing on our Victor is no comparison with that childhood joy." Another recollected, "I don't think I've ever heard a better band than the Pella band... I am a great lover of good music, therefore I always appreciated the opportunity to hear Henry Cox play... I am still interested in good music and good literature, but jazz bands and the modern stories, I have little use for."³³

One of Captain Cox's most memorable moments came in 1897 with the celebration of Pella's semicentennial, the fiftieth year since Dominie Scholte had founded the town. Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band headed a processional parade that stretched out over eight city blocks with the Captain on horseback at the front. The "forty-four" piece orchestra followed under Henry's direction, then a review of seventy teenage girls dressed in Dutch costume with red,



In Washington, D.C.

white, and blue bunting, then a series of floats featuring the surviving founders of 1847, and one with the four grandchildren of H. P. Scholte. Thousands watched including a large contingent from Orange City, Iowa, which had been an offshoot of the Pella Dutch, and 150 wagonloads from Mahaska County. In all, about 2,000 wagons and chariots descended on the town along with trainloads of passengers unloading at the Pella depot. The band marched and gave an evening concert the first day, a morning concert the second day, and noon and afternoon concerts and marches on day three, which was also designated "Old Soldiers Day." Indeed, Murray and the town leaders arranged that the semicentennial correspond with a reunion of the Seventeenth Iowa Infantry, thus adding to the significance and celebration of the occasion. This semi-centennial concert included the following: overtures by Suppe, an intermezzo from Mascagni's "Cavaleria Rusticana," a mazurka, "La Czarina" by Ganne, a selection from Verdi's "La Traviata," "The Pilgrim's Chorus" from Wagner's "Tannhauser," "The Hall of the Mountain King" and "Aase's Death" from Greig's "Peer Gynt Suite," and "The Coronation March" from Meyerbeer's "The Prophet," all followed by popular marches of the day for encores.³⁴

Soon, however, telling changes of both positive and negative nature began to wind down the Cox influence in Pella band history. Upon completing a number of courses at Central College, Murray A. followed his father's footsteps accepting a railroad job in Marshalltown, thus ending his participation in the band. Tragically, in 1899, he returned to Pella suffering from typhoid, and as related earlier, he succumbed to the disease. When Henry, studying in Berlin, Germany as a prodigy at the time, was informed of "the passing of a life, infinitely more precious than his own," (Henry's words), he was also admonished to remain there and complete his advanced training under various virtuosos. When he returned to the United States, it was as a changed and more accomplished musician distraught at his brother's death and unable to involve himself any more at the level he had with the C.R.I. & P. Band.

Few notices remain to be found of band activity in the first decade of the twentieth century, so presumably the Captain too, began to slowly loosen the reins of running a band. He had lost one son and the other was engaged in new fields. Indeed, Henry immersed himself in 1901-02-03 in presenting and performing for a series of thirty classical concerts or recitals at the Central College Auditorium. These recitals covered the broad spectrum of the classical repertoire and presented "268 compositions by 140 composers." Henry also taught at the local college for a while as well. Most importantly, Henry fell in love.³⁵

Actually, according to his own memoirs, Henry had been in love since age six with "Queenie" Snow, and in 1904 they were married. For their next fifty-nine years they made beautiful music together. Queene Hortense Snow Cox fits into Pella lore as well. Her grandparents had been among the pioneers of Pella, and after her own parents had moved along to Nebraska, where she was born, she regularly visited the Dutch town for lengthy periods of time.

Grandfather Snow worked for a time as a telegrapher for Murray Cox at the depot and Queene was often a guest in the Cox home on Main Street. Here she "bewitched" the six year old son. After their 1904 Pella marriage, the couple moved on to Columbia, Missouri, where they both taught at Christian College, Queene teaching concert piano.³⁶

With brother Tom and his wife Betsy opening up the new brick American House Hotel, Captain Murray also kept occupied with that enterprise, and along with his continuing direction of the rail station and the departure by death and marriage of his sons, he retired from his role as Pella's music man in 1911, although it would not be forgotten.

Tom and Betsy ran a high quality hotel and business profited, but he had been in ill health for a long time and it began to afflict him more seriously as the new century wore on. Like his older brother, however, he was a town stalwart, much respected, and also like Murray, he kept past connections to his Civil War days. In Pella in 1908, he attended his last reunion of the Thirty-



**Parading at
Main and Washington
(1897)**

third Iowa where "many were delighted... to note that the cunning of former years of the snare drum had not been forgotten." In January 1909, he passed away, aged fifty-nine years, in his rooms in the American House, and was mourned in Pella as an "Honored Veteran... friendly to everyone... a most genial landlord... a kind husband and a great favorite among the 'army' boys." A later history of the town remembered him: "Few men have ever lived in this community who had more warm friends than Tom Cox," the drummer boy of 1862.³⁷

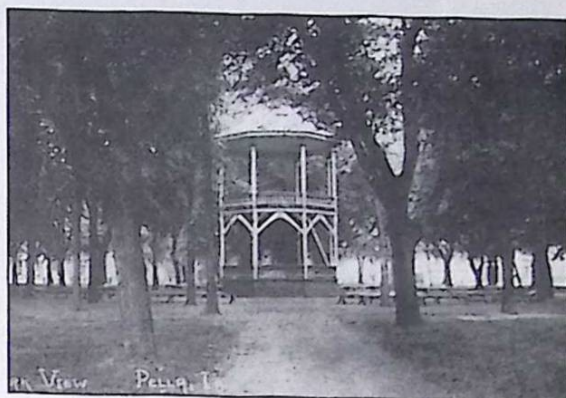
Murray kept up his work at the Pella depot until 1914, when on March 12, he retired just before his sixty-ninth birthday. After forty-eight years on the job, he ranked as the longest termed Rock Island employee at the time. The editor of the *Pella Chronicle* wrote for the occasion:

It has been the privilege of the writer to know Mr. Cox intimately for over twenty years... and he knows no one today whom he could with more assurance speak of as a friend. The *Chronicle* joins the thousands... wishing him many years of leisure to enjoy the fruits of his labor.³⁸

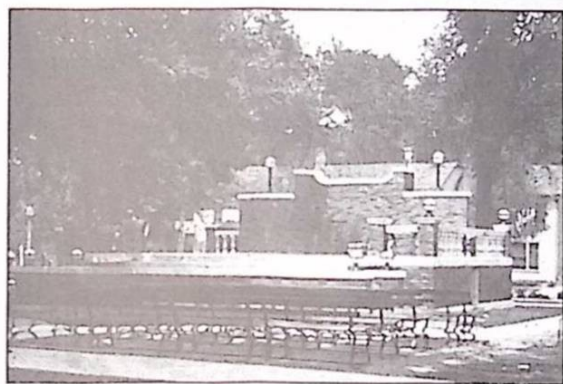
Although upon the death of his brother and his retirement, J.M. Cox now became more directly involved with the American House, he did enjoy much time for leisure and contemplation of his productive life. He lived to see the the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Town of Pella and the citizens took this time to again honor him. On September 28, 1922, the anniversary program was in part headlined "Dedication of Band Stand and City Parks - Capt.

James Murray Cox (In whose honor the Band Stand was erected).” Indeed, the two-tiered bandshell, built in 1881 and four decades old, had been deemed unsafe and replaced by a modern bandstand of brick and stone dedicated to Pella’s Music Man. From his position of honor on the stand, Murray proudly watched a chorus of 600 school children, a performance of the Pella Junior Band, songs by double male quartet, a Boy Scout demonstration, a “Tug of War” between the businessmen north of Franklin Street vs. the Southside., boys’, girls’, three-legged, relay, and fat men’s “(250 pounds or over)” races, and apple and cracker eating contests. After his own remarks of thanks, the festivities continued with a baseball game at Central College, and back at Garden Square, a mixed chorus and a community sing. Finally the “patron saint of music in Pella” was able to watch his first love and creation, a band concert by the now-named Pella Chamber of Commerce Band directed by George Ramsey.³⁹

Murray Cox lived on for another three years in the community that he had embraced with such passion, attending his final regimental gathering in 1924 and being honored on the stand at his last Memorial Day in 1925. On November 15, 1925, J. M. Cox passed away in his rooms at the American House. The town remembered him as “probably Pella’s best known citizen during the past half-century.”



**The Band Stand
in Central Park: 1907**



**The Band Stand
in Central Park: 1922**

Murray was laid to rest with his parents, brothers, John, Joshua, and Tom and son Murray A., in the Oakwood Cemetery to the northwest of Garden Square where he had played as a child and worked as a man.⁴⁰

Seventy more years have passed since Murray Cox’s seven decades as a Pellan, but his spirit and creativity, as well as that

of the family that surrounded him, lives on today in this little-changed Dutch town on the prairies of Iowa. High school, college, and community bands continue to march and play and gain recognition far beyond the confines of the city, reaching out to all assembled from the prestigious Rose, Orange, and Fiesta Bowl parades to Pella’s own Tulip Time Celebration during the Spring of each year.



Tulip Tower of Today

If one listens closely in the evenings of Garden Square, the sounds of the first concert - the howl of the wolf, the scream of the panther, the cry of the deer - are intermingled with the clarion sounds of horns, the staccato beat of drums, and the tramping feet of the marching bands of Pella's past and present.



Continuing the Tradition
The Marching Dutch at Tulip Time, 1997

NOTES

Jim McMillan is Public Historian and Assistant Professor of History at Central College, Pella, Iowa. This research was prepared at the request of the Marion County Historical Society, Knoxville, Iowa, in the summer of 1996. Thank you to Madeline Vanderzyl of the Central College Archives and to the staffs at the Central College Library, the Pella Public Library, the Knoxville Public Library, the Knoxville Library Genealogical Collection, the Pella Historical Society, and the Marion County Historical Society.

1. Historian/journalist/politician and native Pellan, Cyrenus Cole makes this comment on page 17 of *Souvenir History of Pella, Iowa*, (The Booster Press, G. A. Stout, Publisher: Pella, 1922). Hereinafter, this book, published on Pella's 75th Anniversary, will be referred to as *Pella*, 1922.

2. *History of Pella, 1847-1987*, v. 1, (pvt. pub.: Pella, Iowa, 1987) 293-94, "Cox Family, F91." Hereinafter these books of compiled business, family, and event sketches will be referred to as *Pella* 1987, v.1 or 2. *Pella*, 1922, 189-91. This particular sketch has pictures of William, Charity, Tom, Murray, and his wife Luella. *The History of Marion County, Iowa*, (Union Historical Company: Des Moines, Iowa, 1881, reprint) 650-51. J. M. Cox is also mentioned on pages 637-39 and 659. Hereinafter, this book is referred to as *Marion Co.*, 1881. The 1872 *History of Marion County* by Donnell makes no mention of the Coxes.

3. *Pella*, 1987, v. 2, 345-46 "Cox, Tom and Murray, Civil War Experiences, F 65;" *Pella*, 1922, 131-35. The latter source lists Joshua Cox incorrectly as dying in the war, while not listing John correctly as the one who perished. Also there is no official local record of Jacob having enlisted. John Russell allegedly captured Confederate guerrilla John Quantrill toward the end of the war while a cavalryman. This information is mentioned in "Pella Bands," see note 11.

4. *Pella*, 1987, v. 1, 456, "Rhynsburger, Cornelis and Regina (Van Der Ley), F 298." See also the following citation.

5. All of the following information on the Cox war experience is taken from *Marion Co.*, 1881, 482-86, and *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, (Des Moines, 1911) 3-13, "Historical Sketch: Seventeenth Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry." The latter is held at the Genealogy Room of the Knoxville Library. The Murray Cox obituary mentions him being present for the Vicksburg campaign and Missionary Ridge, but this is unlikely and contradicted by *Roster*; *Pella Chronicle*, 11/19/25, hereinafter *Chronicle*. Similarly, the obituary mentions his "escape" from Andersonville, but this is not upheld by research. *Roster* mentions a history of the Seventeenth Iowa Regiment by Colonel Clark E. Wever, but gives no publishing information. During the course of the war, the regiment sustained 166 deaths out of a total 1,085 enrolled.

6. Information of the Thirty-third is drawn from *Marion Co.*, 1881, 488-96. Tom Cox's discharge papers of July 17, 1865 are in the Cox Family file, Central College Archives, Geisler Library, Central College, Pella.

7. *Pella*, 1987, "F 65."

8. A statue representing Captain Albert Hobbs who died at Shiloh was erected in 1911 in Pella's Garden Square by the Ladies of the GAR, Circle # 57. Assuredly Murray Cox attended its unveiling on Memorial Day, where former two-time presidential candidate General James B. Weaver of Colfax addressed the audience. Weaver ran for the Greenback party in 1880 and the Populist party in 1892. See *Pella*, 1922, 246-47. Hobbs was among the Central students who sacrificed their lives. A plaque in their memory listing names and places of death was erected in the college's Old Central.

The original was destroyed by the fire that burned Old Central in 1922. An exact reproduction hangs today in Central Hall. See also *The Road To Shiloh*, a volume of poetry by John Dressel, including the lengthy epic title poem which focuses, in part, on Hobbs (Stubbs in the poem). Murray Cox belonged to the Albert Hobbs Post # 404. The father, William Cox, died soon after the war in September 1865. The brother, Joshua, died in 1868, at age twenty, and a year older than Thomas.

9. For railroads, see obituary of Thomas Cox in the *Pella Chronicle*, February, 1909, and Murray's obituary of 11/19/25. See also the Cox Family file at the Central College Archives. See also, in file, an article headlined "March 12, 1914, J.M. Cox to Retire." Undoubtedly, it is from the *Pella Chronicle*.

10. Madeline Vanderzyl, *Reminiscences of Pella*, from the *Pella Chronicles* of 6/11/31, H. E. Wormhoudt, "Way Back When Youngsters Had a Full Program on Sunday," and 6/4/31, W. H. Herbig, "Back When I Was a Boy in Pella." This is a selection of articles on local history compiled by the Central College archivist, all drawn from the *Pella Chronicle*.

11. *Pella*, 1922, 224, for a picture of this band; see also "Pella Bands and Orchestras: An account of the First Fifty Years," 5/7/64 in Vanderzyl, miscellaneous clippings from the *Pella Chronicle* compiled and held at the Central College Archives. This is a notebook volume of clippings similar in content to *Reminiscences* of more recent historical sketches that has not been bound and printed. Undoubtedly, this one page piece was written by Henry Cox. Hereinafter it is referred to as "Pella Bands." Thomas is also mentioned as a cornet player.

12. C. M. Moore, "Memories of Pella No. 9," from *Pella Chronicle*, v. 49 no. 25, in Vanderzyl, *Reminiscences*. This piece was most likely written in 1931 like the majority of the other articles in Vanderzyl. Moore, in 1931, was editor of the Coopersville (MI) *Observer*.

13. "Pella Bands." A picture of this band is in *Pella*, 1922, 130. Interview with Steve McCombs, current co-director of Pella High School and City Bands, July 6, 1996, Pella.

14. Program of 11/20/1882 in the Cox Family file, Central College Archives. There is also a program from the 1882 Central College commencement featuring the Light Infantry Band.

15. Vanderzyl, miscellaneous clippings, Central College Archives, "Scholte, Nollen, Cox First to Wield Music Culture Influence," *Pella Chronicle*, 5/14/64. This is probably written by Henry Cox. See also "Pella Bands."

16. Undated obituary of Luella Keables Cox in Cox Family file, Central College Archives from the *Pella Chronicle*. She died 2/22/36 as indicated in the cemetery/necrology holdings of the Pella Library. Information on Dr. Keables can be found in *Marion Co.*, 1881, 659. Keables gave up his Pella practice and moved to Thayer, Kansas, in 1870, where he became mayor and a representative to the Kansas Legislature. He returned to Pella and resumed his practice in 1875. See also *Pella*, 1987, v. 2, "F 65."

17. An article on the home appeared in the *Pella Chronicle* of 7/30/65 upon its donation by the family to Central College. A picture of the home is in *Pella*, 1922, 275. Murray Cox had the first phones in Pella installed at his home and at the rail depot. The house was used for day care facilities by Central College and has since been sold by the college, torn down, and replaced by a modern day care facility.

18. W. R. Yard, "It Used to Be That Only Professing Christians Graduated from Central College," undated from *Chronicle*, in Vanderzyl, *Reminiscences*.

19. C. M. Moore, "In the Days of Long Ago," in Vanderzyl, *Reminiscences*. It is not clear whether Iowa evangelist and baseball player Billy Sunday was there on this occasion or is just being used in comparison. He may well have been on the speakers' stand.
20. All material on this issue is drawn from W.H.H. Barker, "The Pella *Chronicle* of the Days of the Past," *Chronicle* 1/19/31 and Ralf A. Baker, "Celebrated a Republican Victory and Got a Licking for It," *Chronicle*, 6/11/31, both in Vanderzyl, *Reminiscences*. Barker left Pella in 1881, hence the approximate dating of this incident.
21. *Pella*, 1922, 109-110.
22. On hotels, see *Pella*, 1987, 68-69; "The Hotels of the City," in "Pella Advertiser Souvenir Edition" 15, in miscellaneous papers, Central College Archives, contains a picture of the second hotel, the American House run by C. Bongers. A picture of the first hotel, called the Franklin and run by the Cox parents is in *Pella*, 1922, 212. See also "Cox's Hotel Soon to Open," in Cox Family file. After it was sold to Cornelius Bongers in 1872, it burned in the fire of July 8, 1872. A new building was then erected which stood until replaced in 1902 by Tom and Murray. On fires, see the miscellaneous papers of Loren Vanderzyl, "Fires Common in Early Pella," Central College Archives. On the Nossaman Family, pre-Dutch pioneers of the Pella area, see *Reminiscences*, "How the William Welch Family Came to Lake Prairie Township [May 17, 1843]," by Sarah Welch Nossaman, *Pella Chronicle*, May 2, 1940. See also Madeline Vanderzyl, miscellaneous clippings of the *Pella Chronicle*, May 14, 1964, "Nossaman Family Gave First Dutch in Pella Shelter," Central College Archives.
23. Obituary of Tom Cox in *Chronicle*, Feb. 1909. This mentions that he is survived by a brother Jacob residing in Los Angeles, California.
24. From "Cox's Hotel Soon to Open," in Cox Family file, Central College Archives.
25. "Pella Bands."
26. Henry Cox, "The Life and Career of Henry Cox," a 30 page memoir in the Cox Family file, Central College Archives, hereinafter referred to as Henry Cox, "The Life."
27. "Pella Bands." A picture of a 21 piece 1892 C.R.I. & P. Band is in *Pella*, 1922, 234, and it hangs in the Pella Historical Society.
28. Henry Cox, "The Life."
29. This picture hangs in the Pella Historical Society and is also found in *Pella*, 1987, 63, "Pella's First Bands."
30. Henry Cox, "The Life."
31. "Pella Bands." A cartoon depicting the march in Washington, D. C. hangs in the Pella Historical Society. It was drawn by Ed LeCocq in March 1970.
32. Program of 6/17/1896 in Cox Family file.
33. *Reminiscences*, Chas. H. Thomason, "Watching the Old Fire Department Pump Was Good Setting Up Exercise," and Mrs. F. W. Snow, "The Pella Band Was the Best in the Land and Still Is." These are undated, but most likely drawn from 1931 issues of the *Chronicle*.
34. *Pella*, 1987, v.1, 119-122, "Semicentennial," "T 87," containing a picture of the band

in march. The song list is from "Pella Bands." It is interesting to note that no Dutch, only American, flags were permitted to be displayed by the town leaders during these festivities.

35. Programs in Cox Family file; see also Henry Cox, "The Life."

36. Henry Cox, "A Pitifully Meager Biography of Queene Hortense Snow," a 30-page manuscript in Cox Family file.

37. Obituary of Tom Cox in *Chronicle*, Feb., 1909; *Pella*, 1922, 189.

38. *Chronicle*, 3/12/14.

39. The program of the 75th is in the Cox Family file. The J. M. Cox bandstand is pictured in *Pella*, 1922, 265. It was constructed at the north end of the park. The original bandstand in the center was replaced by a cast iron fountain in 1922. In 1956, this was replaced by an electric fountain and removed to Swimming Pool Park. With the 1968 erection of the current Tulip Toren (Tower), which also serves as a bandstand, on the south end of the park, the Cox bandstand has been torn down and replaced by the original fountain moved back to the Garden Square in 1972. Bricks from the Cox bandstand were used to construct the setting for the old fountain. This information is from the miscellaneous papers of Loren Vanderzyl, "Central Park Fountain," in Central College Archives.

40. Obituary of J. Murray Cox in *Chronicle*, 11/19/25.

Addenda

Henry Cox and his wife Queene long continued the family music tradition. After teaching at Christian College in Missouri, they moved along to positions at Grinnell College, Des Moines Music College, and the University of Iowa. By the 1910s, Henry had begun a lengthy career as teacher in the public schools of Omaha, Nebraska, during which time he performed in and assisted in directing the Omaha Symphony. Henry and Queene returned to Pella in 1939 and taught once again at Central College, retiring by 1950. In his later years, Henry entered into one of his more unusual projects in attempting to adapt the music of the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner" to a range better suited to the average voice. Iowa's U.S. Congressman Bert Bandstra introduced a joint resolution of Congress to this effect but no action was taken (Central College Bulletin, May 1966). Queene Snow Cox died in 1963 followed by Henry in 1966 at age eighty-six years. He had lived to oversee the financing and construction of the Cox-Snow Music Center at Central College, which was dedicated October 17, 1964.

Thomas's wife, Betsy, continued to run the American House Hotel until after Murray's 1925 death. It was then sold and became known as the Pella Hotel, which existed until 1976. The building still stands and is used for various commercial establishments and a home for its current owners, the Steenhoeks. Betsy died in 1948, twelve years after Murray's wife Luella.

The last Pella Cox, Hattie, daughter of Murray and Luella and sister of Henry, died in 1973. All are interred at Oakwood Cemetery: John (d. 1862), William (d. 1865), Joshua (d. 1868), Charity (d. 1872), Murray A. (d. 1899), Thomas (d. 1909), J. Murray, (d. 1925), Luella (d. 1936), Betsy (d. 1948), Queene (d. 1963), Henry (d. 1966), and Hattie (d. 1973), along with other family members.

Photography Credits

The 1922 program is courtesy of the Central College Archives. The photographs of "The Little Drummer Boy of '62," Cox's C.R.I. & P. Band (late 1890s) and close-up, The Ed LeCocq cartoon of the Washington D.C. march, and the Tulip Tower are by Mary Roozeboom of Rose Tree Photography. The picture of the parade at Main and Washington is from Pella, 1987, and the photography of the Marching Dutch at Tulip Time, 1997 is by Dale Bryner McMillan. The remaining photographs are from Pella, 1922.



20 Gerhard "Schilder" Nollen – Self-portrait

SCHILDER NOLLEN

by Kathleen Goldzung Vanden Oever

Gerhard Nollen or Schilder Nollen, which means "Painter Nollen" in Dutch, was a unique member of the early communities of Pella and Keokuk. He left a visual record of some of the people involved in the development of these towns, and his paintings impart a tangible shape to the development of his own life and interests.

A brief outline of his life can be drawn from official records and remembrances of the Nollen family. A second child, Gerhard Nollen was born on March 6, 1830, to Hendrik and Zwaantje Nollen, who lived in the small town of Didam in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. Here, Hendrik Nollen was the schoolmaster, sexton, and church organist.

Only two tales of mischief are gleaned from Gerhard's childhood. Both have been recorded by the artist's nephew, John Nollen, a former president of Grinnell College who heard them from his father Jan, the painter's older brother. On one occasion Jan discovered that his penny bank was empty. He immediately suspected Gerhard and when he found him, the child confessed that he'd taken the money to buy rides on the merry-go-round at the local fair. The second incident involved a basket of poffertjes, a Dutch pastry that Gerhard's mother had prepared for a neighbor. Gerhard was entrusted with the task of delivering the basket of goodies, but on the way he sampled "just one," or maybe two of them. When he arrived he presented the basket with his mother's message to the neighbor who lifted the doily and found only one poffertje left. He thereupon asked little Gerhard if he'd like to try it, and the boy finished off the last one.

The events surrounding the painter's early education and art training are related in Jan Nollen's historical fiction account of his family's experiences in the Netherlands entitled, "The Tower of Babel." The Nollen children attended their father's school, and therefore he was very sensitive to their development. When Gerhard was about ten years old, Hendrik noted that his son had "no head for studies." He'd observed that instead of attending to schoolwork, Gerhard preferred to draw figures in the margins of his copybooks and slates. As a result Hendrik decided to help develop Gerhard's talent and train him with a useful skill so that the budding artist would not starve in the future. Arrangements were made to apprentice Gerhard to a housepainter who lived in Arnhem, the capital of Gelderland that was about thirteen miles northeast of Didam. Gerhard lived with the housepainter's family and worked with paint crews during the day. In the evenings he attended a school to keep abreast of his regular classwork, and he also took art lessons.

At some point, possibly 1848, Gerhard enrolled at an academy of design in Arnhem in order to develop his drawing skill and to train him for painting finer work on homes. Although no record of the name of this academy exists, he apparently did very well because both Jan in his "Tower of Babel" and Hendrik in a letter dated 1851 relate that Gerhard received

medals for his art work while in school. Jan says that, "after two years of attendance, the silver and the following year, the gold medal [were] awarded to him." Hendrik just mentions the gold medal, writing on October 14, 1851:

Last Friday – a week ago [Gerhard] was crowned with honors in Arnhem as the first artist of the entire school. A large gold medal upon which his name was engraved was presented to him by the director of the school, with an endorsement from the governor, high public, and military officials and other notables. It was an occasion filled with everything illustrious.

Jan also mentions that Gerhard took private lessons with a landscape painter.

In 1854, Hendrik Nollen decided to emigrate to the United States in hopes of providing his family with better opportunities for the future. They arrived in Pella on June 13, 1854.

At first Gerhard attempted to make a living as a portrait painter and private art instructor. He built a studio that is still part of the original structure of the Nollen home that is presently located at 618 Washington Street. However, the inhabitants of Pella were either farmers or business people who were struggling to establish themselves. They had very little time or money to invest in portraits, landscapes, or art lessons. Therefore in 1856, Gerhard struck out for Keokuk, a more favorable place for a professional artist considering it was slated to become one of the major urban centers of the Midwest at the time. The exact date of his move is unknown but paintings dated 1856 exist in both Keokuk and Pella.

When he arrived, it is believed that he set up lodging with the Van Weerden family and worked in J.H. Emerson's "Photographic Palace." Emerson specialized in portraits taken with the daguerreotype and ambrotype methods. Gerhard probably helped with the photography, but he spent most of his time painting portraits, most probably in an adjoining studio. His partnership with Emerson is verified in the listings of Keokuk's 1859 city directory.

While working in Emerson's studio, Nollen met another photographer named Samuel Van Grieken. When Emerson decided to relocate his studio, Nollen and Van Grieken opened their own studio in Emerson's place. The announcement they entered in the *Keokuk Gate City Daily* on December 6, 1859, read:

The undersigned, Samuel Van Grieken, formerly operator at Emerson's Photographic Palace and Gerhard H. Nollen, well known to the citizens of this vicinity as a Portrait Painter, have associated themselves in business and reopened the photographic rooms formerly occupied by Emerson.... They respectfully solicit the patronage of the public in their respective arts, and will be at all times ready to supply any kind of pictures, from the smallest miniature to the size of life.

Paintings and drawing lessons were also advertised.

Nollen and Van Grieken stayed together until at least 1863 when another advertisement (discovered in New York City) extolling their mastery of the latest photographic style appears in the newspaper. The year 1863 also included an account of a history painting entitled "Stephen Decatur at Tripoli" on which Nollen worked for a year. This painting is now lost but the descriptive record indicates that he was still painting.

Sometime between 1863 and 1867 Nollen and Van Grieken parted ways, and on December 10, 1867, Nollen announced his own photography studio in the *Gate City Daily* advertisement:

G. H. Nollen, Photographer and Portrait Painter
Rooms on South side Main Street, between
3rd and 4th over Younker's Store,
Where he will be found at all times prepared
to attend to all calls either for
Photographs or Painted Likenesses.

The last notice of his activity in Keokuk appears in an 1871 directory listing him as a portrait painter. In that same year he returned to Pella. No one knows exactly why he returned to Pella, but this comment by John Nollen suggests a possible business failure: "His experiment as a photographer in Keokuk proved only his lack of practical business sense."

Whatever the circumstances, when he settled again in Pella he continued to paint and give art lessons. In 1874, he married Geertje Kramer. A son was born to them in the following year, but she died in childbirth and the child died three months later. Following this tragedy, Gerhard shared an apartment above Pella National Bank with his younger bachelor brother Henry until around 1900, when the census lists him as a member of the Cornelius Welle household. Welle was married to Nollen's younger sister Zwaantje.

In 1895, Gerhard was growing older. He was declared unsound of mind with his possessions placed under the guardianship of his older brother Jan. However he continued to paint as evidenced by two portraits and a landscape that were signed and dated in 1896, the year following this decision. He spent his last years with the Welles until he died in 1901 of "La Grippe."

* * *

The information for this outline of Nollen's life was gathered during the search for his paintings and drawings. By the close of the search (Spring 1981), forty paintings and four drawings attributed to him had been located. Most of these belong to the descendants of the painter's relatives and friends since he had no family of his own. Only a few of the pieces belong to the descendants of the patrons who the artist dealt with on a professional level.

The majority of these works are either portraits or landscapes. The few exceptions include some copies of more famous paintings, a set of illustrations for reading primers that his brother Jan wrote, and an account of the

lost history Decatur painting which he completed in 1863. This study of his works evolved around the question of attribution, Gerhard only signed twenty of the forty-four pieces. In order to decide whether the remaining twenty-four pieces were by Nollen's hand, I studied the signed paintings to develop a sense of his unconscious signature – his brushwork.

Gerhard characteristically covered the entire canvas with a thin layer of paint. He carefully smoothed the brushstrokes in this layer in order to create a slick surface. He delineated and modeled the forms in this manner and then returned to embellish details like jewelry, lace, bark, and leaves with brighter dabs of paint. I found that this handling of the paint occurred in nearly all of the unsigned works. The exceptions appear to be unfinished or altered works.

This study of the signed paintings highlighted the fact that Gerhard used two different signatures. In a majority of the works he signed his name "G.H. Nollen" in various lettering styles ranging from seraphed characters to a more ornamental script. When he signed his name in this manner he sometimes included the word "fecit" or the abbreviation "fax." Both of these words refer to different tenses of the Latin verb *facio* which means "to make." They probably were translated "made by" or "made in." In a sense they serve the same function as the word "by." The second signature he used appears on only two landscapes. It is a monogram using his initials G.H.N.

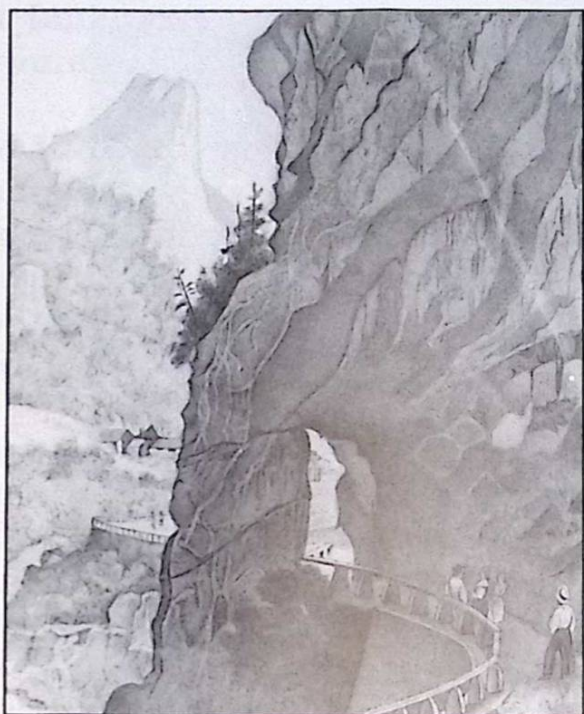
Once I had developed a good sense of Nollen's brushwork, I dealt with his stylistic development. This involved placing the works in chronological order. I found that the paintings cluster in small groups around a few dates that are dispersed across his lifetime. There are a few early drawings and paintings from his school days in the Netherlands, a few from his first two years in Pella, a group at the start of his years in Keokuk, and then a few sets dispersed across the last three decades of his life in Pella.

I found that, first; it is easier to determine the stylistic development of Nollen's portraits than of his landscapes because the portraits bear more of the dates Nollen recorded. Second; that his handling of portraiture was strongly influenced by his work in the photography studios, but the photography did not touch his approach to landscape. Third; that all of the landscape in this collection originated in Pella and most of them fall in the last two decades of his life. Therefore I shall deal with his early work and portraiture first and his landscape and other works second.

To begin, we have a group of five works that Nollen did while he was a student in the Netherlands. The first two are drawings. Gerhard was twelve years old when he drew the view of a mountain pathway.¹ (*Superscript numbers refer to photocopies of paintings accompanying text.*) It is a concentrated study of values and an intriguing example of his imagination considering he never left the flat terrain of the Netherlands until he was twenty-four. This work belongs to the Pella Historical Society.

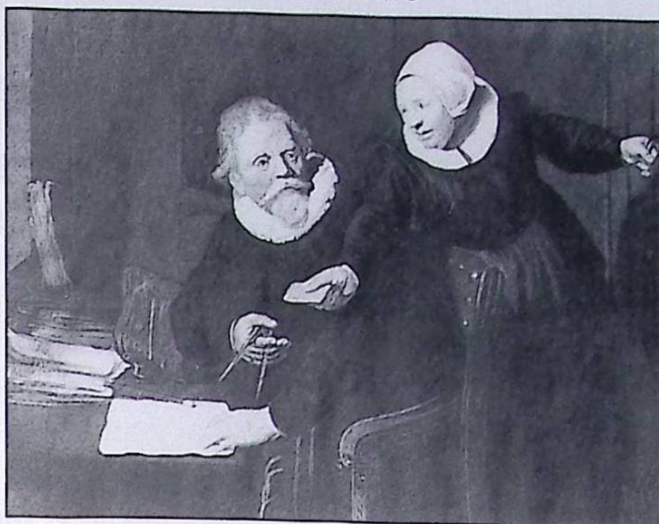
The second drawing is a rendering of Rembrandt's painting, "A Shipbuilder and His Wife."² This drawing belongs to Marie and Elmer Nollen of Pella. It was probably a learning exercise which Gerhard completed in the

1 *Mountain Walk*



3 *Hendrik Nollen (father)*

2 *Shipbuilder and his wife*



4 *Jan and Gerhard (brothers)*

academy because it is dated 1850. This was the year he received the silver medal, and this most likely represents the caliber of work for which he was honored.

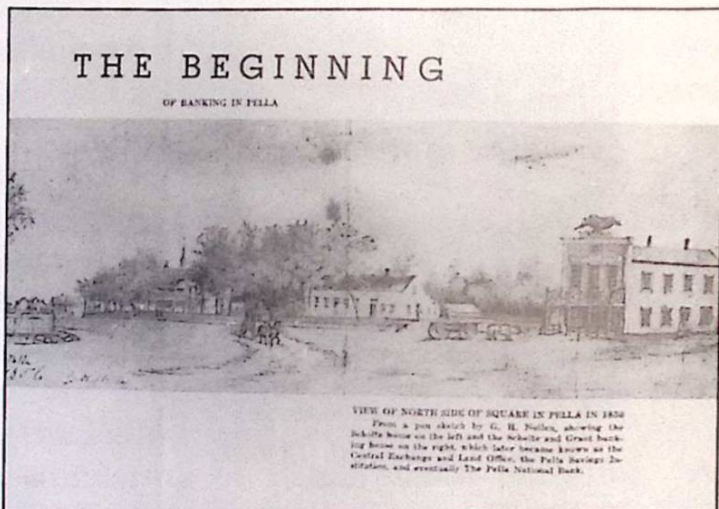
The other three works from Nollen's student years are portraits. They introduce his "pre-photographic" treatment of the figure. Usually the faces are brightly lit ovals in which the eyes dominate. Shadows are minimal creating an almost flat appearance, and patches of red enliven the lips and cheeks.

Gerhard painted this portrait of his father, Hendrik Nollen³ when he was fifteen. It hangs in the Pella Historical Society. It is impossible to tell whether the next portrait of Hendrik (not shown) was a copy or the original of these two because it lacks a signature. I suspect the others in the family wanted a portrait of "Dad" and Gerhard agreed to paint one.

The final painting from these formative years is a double portrait of Jan Nollen (the standing figure) and Gerhard himself.⁴ It belongs to Janna and James Bragg of Des Moines. Gerhard painted this when he was nineteen. In the "Tower of Babel," Jan Nollen mentions that Gerhard painted a portrait of them both while visiting a fair. When Jan brought it home, his parents and neighbors were amazed at Gerhard's ability to capture their likenesses. This appears to be that painting.

The next five works fall within the two years Nollen lived in Pella and first attempted to paint portraits professionally. The first is a portrait of Henry P. Scholte (the Dominie's son)⁵ that is signed and dated 1855. It belongs to Lenore Hettinga and hangs in the Scholte House. This piece is closely related in style to an unmarked portrait of Nollen's three sisters⁶ that hangs in the Pella Historical Society. This portrait must have been painted around the same time as the previous one because one of the sisters died in March 1855. In these two works Nollen introduced more color, the background curtain, and an open window. Their inclusion indicates that Nollen may have encountered examples of English portraiture by Gainsborough or Reynolds or had seen popular adaptations of their portrait compositions.

I place the next two portraits of Nollen's parents^{7,8} in this period despite the fact that they are attributed to 1845 by notations on the backs written by the painter's nieces, Sarah and Hanna Nollen. The treatment is much more sophisticated than in Nollen's student work. There is more of a sense of volume and color. At the same time they are not yet "photographic." The portrait of Hendrik was obviously copied again. These portraits belong to Mr. and Mrs. Kassander of Tuscon, Arizona.

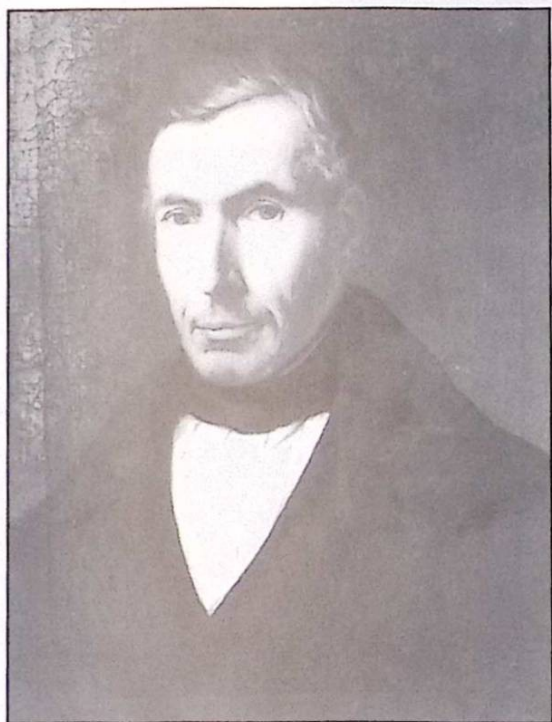
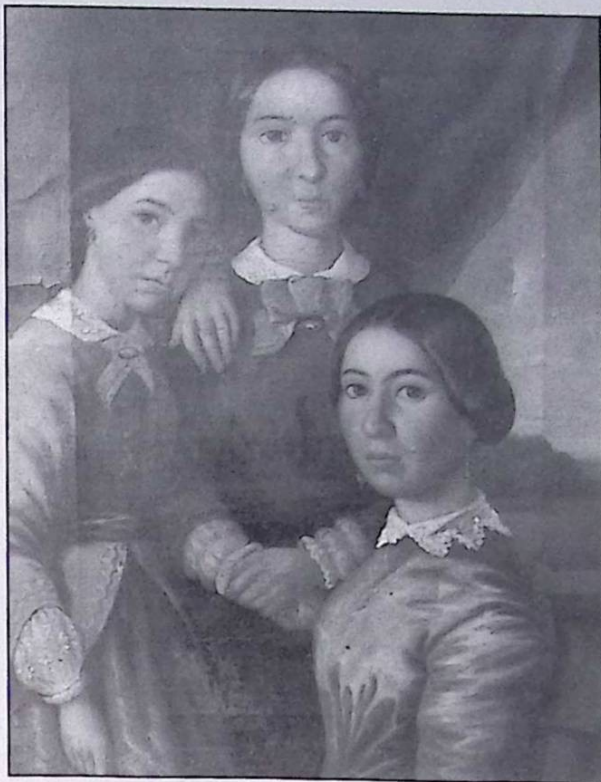


9 Pella square's northside, 1856

5 *The Dominie's son*
Henry P. Scholte



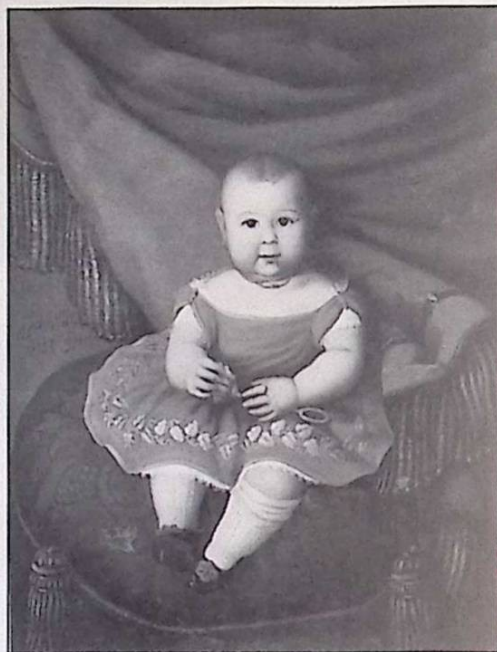
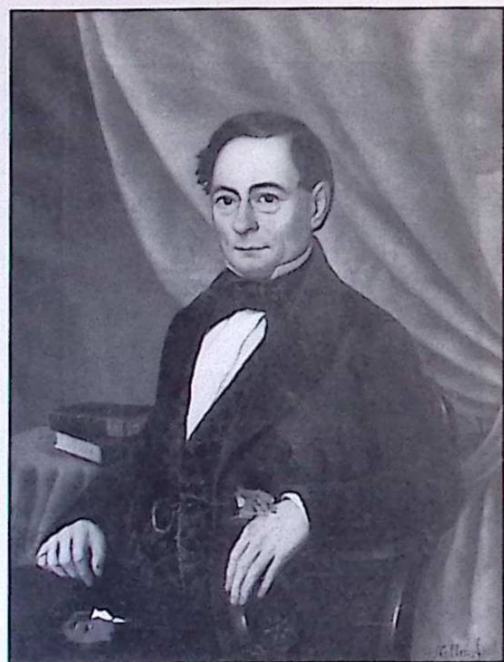
6 *The Nollen sisters*



7 *Hendrik Nollen (father)*



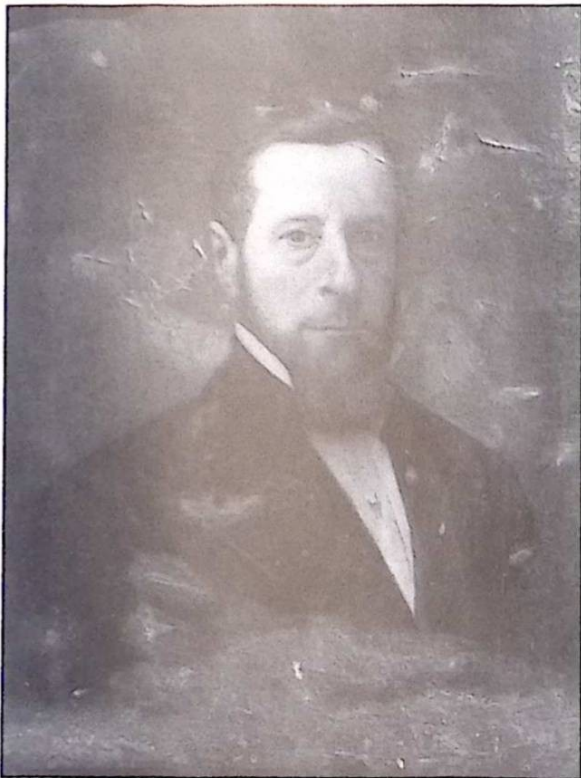
8 *Zwaantje Nollen (mother)*

10 *The Van Weerden sons*11 *The Van Weerden daughters*12 *Martha Elizabeth
Van Weerden*13 *Samuel Van Grieken*14 *Maria Henke Van Weerden*

The fact that Nollen moved to Keokuk sometime in 1856 is established by the existence of this drawing of the north side of the square in Pella,⁹ and the following group portrait of Charles Van Weerden's four sons.¹⁰ The date and signature are found on the book held by the oldest boy standing in the back. This painting is the first of seven owned by the Van Weerden family of Keokuk. This was the family with which Gerhard lived when he first moved to Keokuk. Mrs. Van Weerden claims he painted the seven portraits she owns to pay for his room and board.

In this group of paintings the transition from Nollen's tendency to stylize his subjects to a more photographic treatment can be seen. The first few portraits¹¹ are still closely related to the handling of the Pella portraits, but they mark the highpoint of his pre-photographic style. All of the elements in the painting are in sharp focus. Details of clothing and jewelry are exquisitely rendered and the smooth, round, flat treatment of the faces has been perfected. It is interesting to note that while the curtain is still present, the window has disappeared suggesting a more studio-like interior. The portraits of Maria Elizabeth Van Weerden,¹² Samuel Van Grieken,¹³ and Maria Henke Van Weerden¹⁴ exemplify this style.

The change can be seen when the portrait of Maria Henke Van Weerden is compared to the portrait of her husband, Charles Van Weerden.¹⁵ His portrait marks the first of those in which a more photographic treatment of the subject occurs. Notice that the light seems to come from a single source and casts dark shadows on his face, giving it a sense of volume. The head and planes of the face are more angular, the features are better proportioned, and the stare has left the eyes. This photographic quality is even more evident in the portrait of Mrs. Samuel Van Grieken.¹⁶ The grey coloring, even of her skin,



15 *Charles Van Weerden*



16 *Mrs. Samuel Van Grieken*

and the pose are reminiscent of old portrait photographs.

The last two portraits from Keokuk are definite proof that Gerhard worked with photographers in 1857. They are two versions of Chief Keokuk. Chief Keokuk was not alive in 1857 but a daguerrotype of him was used by many artists besides Nollen to create logos for local businesses. The first portrait of the chief hangs in Keokuk's Historical Society (not shown). Note the color of the robe and turban. The next portrait of the chief hangs in the City Council chambers.¹⁷ More of the original photo was used in this one; the robe and turban have changed color but the stance and the details are the same. This portrait was given to the city by the Le Bron estate. This family owned one of the major businesses in Keokuk so this portrait was probably commissioned to hang in their establishment. No other portraits surfaced in Keokuk in spite of my inquiries. All of the portraits we've seen are clustered around the years 1856 and 1857. Not until 1874 when he had returned to Pella do we see how sophisticated his handling of the portrait had become. The painting that introduces this small group is of Johanna Scholte Nollen, the wife of Jan Nollen.¹⁸ It is filled with a warmth and sensitivity that transcends the photographic treatment of the subject. This work and the companion portrait of her husband¹⁹ belong to Mr. and Mrs. James Bragg.

Two more unsigned portraits appear to fall into this 1870s period because of their oval canvas and intimate treatment. The first is his self-portrait which belongs to Dorothy and Marion Nollen.^{20, see page 34} The second is a



17 Chief Keokuk



18 Johanna Scholte Nollen



19 Jan Nollen (brother)

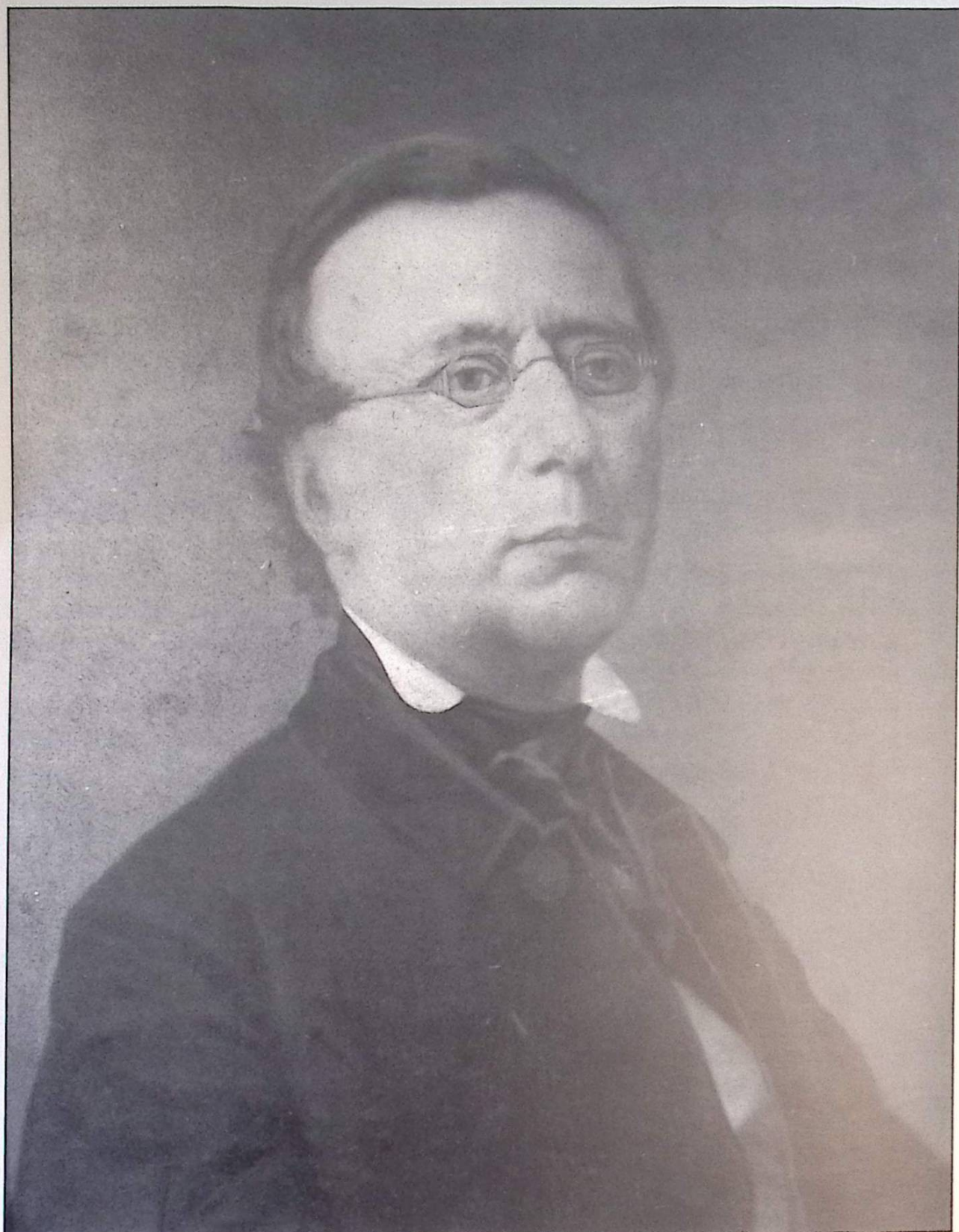
21 *Zwaantje Nollen (mother)*22 *Mrs. Hendricks Eysink*

portrait of Gerhard's mother Zwaantje.²¹ This one hangs in the Pella Historical Society opposite the 1845 portrait of her husband Hendrik. However in 1874, she would have been seventy-two, a much more reasonable age for the woman in this painting.

The next portrait of Mrs. Hendricks Eysink²² is a puzzle. Its sensitive and subdued treatment is akin to the previous portraits of the 1870s, but a slip attached to the back states that she died in 1857. I place it in this later period because of its style and suggest that it was painted from a photo, but this is open to question. This work belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Boot.

Twenty years elapsed between this group and the next two portraits. They are both dated 1896 and hang in Pella's Historical Society. Subdued color characterizes these two paintings. The first is of Dominie Scholte.²³ It is strikingly similar to a drawing of him that is said to have been done by an itinerant artist which is also found in the Historical Society. This artist included the stubble on the Dominie's chin but Nollen cleaned him up. The second portrait depicts the Dominie's daughter, Sara Maria Scholte Bousquet²⁴ and may have come from a photo considering the double shadow by her shoulders.

I also place a small drawing (3" by 3") in the same time period as these paintings. It is found in a scrapbook that Sara Kassander of Tucson, Arizona is compiling. As you can see, it is believed to be Johanna Nollen at age fourteen or fifteen. If it is, then Gerhard would have had to have drawn it in 1856. However, I found a photo of Hanna Nollen, Johanna's daughter in the same scrapbook. This photo was dated 1897, the year Hanna was fourteen. Unless Johanna was the spitting image of her daughter and both wore plain dresses at fourteen, I suspect the drawing is of Hanna and therefore dated around 1897.²⁵



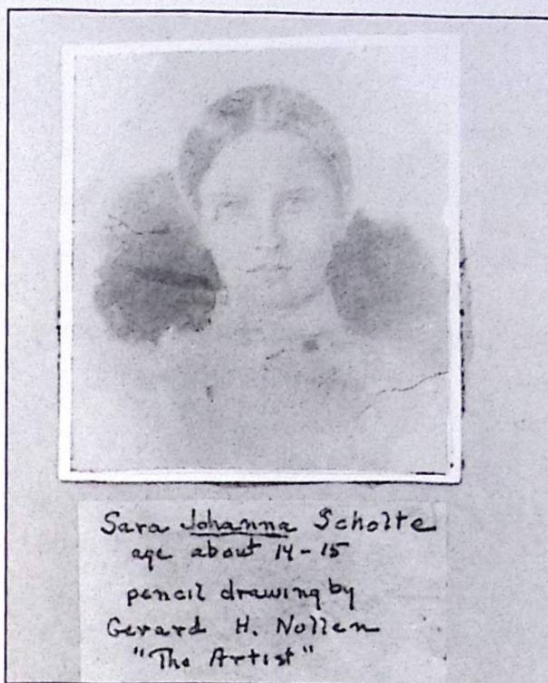
23

Dominie Henry Peter Scholte
Founder of Pella
by
Schilder Nollen

24 *The Dominie's daughter*
Sara Maria Scholte Bousquet



25 *Hannah or Johanna Nollen*



26 *"The Mystery Woman"*



27 *Mrs. Hendricka Middlekoop*
Hospers

Two more portraits are puzzling examples of Gerhard's work. The first is a small unsigned painting entitled "The Mystery Woman"²⁶ that belongs to Lenore Hettinga. She says that Gerhard gave it to the Dominie's wife. It's a puzzle because the woman appears to be in a photo studio in a pose much like that of Mrs. Samuel Van Grieken. However the handling of the figure is more rigid than is usually found in his photographic works. The small format may account for this treatment. Or maybe the painting was one of Gerhard's first attempts at rendering a photo when he moved to Keokuk, and he kept it until he returned to Pella. The second puzzle is the portrait of Mrs. Hendricka Middlekoop Hospers²⁷ that hangs in the Pella Historical Society. The brushwork is less refined than in his other works. It is possible that he didn't paint this work, he never finished it, or that someone altered it.

Now we come to the landscape paintings. As I said before, photography never influenced his approach to this subject. Instead these paintings reflect different aspects of the landscape style that was popular in the Netherlands when he was attending school. This style was a mixture of three influences. First, it was grounded in the emulation of the seventeenth-century masters such as Ruysdael, Cuyp, and Potter. The compositions and subject matter of these artists were upheld as models, and in some cases it was considered a compliment if an artist could paint a piece that couldn't be distinguished from the work of a seventeenth-century master. This tendency was modified by the influence of French Romanticism. The Romantics sought to evoke a mood of mystery and grandeur in their works. Often the scale of nature was exaggerated and embellished, and people were dwarfed and isolated to help create these feelings. Popular taste dictated the third element of landscape painting in the early nineteenth century. Inclusion of figures who were engaged in everyday activities was a favorite motif, and the predominance of subdued colors, particularly browns was typical.

Since only one of Nollen's landscapes is specifically dated, this section begins with this painting.²⁸ It is dated 1896 and belongs to Dorothy and Marion Nollen. It falls into a Romantic vein in the sense that a mood of calm and grandeur is evoked by the relationship of the self-absorbed figures to the isolated stand of pines. The ray of light that falls on the figures appears again in Nollen's other landscapes. This painting also reintroduces the imaginative side of Gerhard which we saw in his very first drawing of mountains, for rarely do his landscapes depict the terrain of Iowa. I believe the next landscape²⁹ was completed around the same time because of the similar coloring and emphasis on mystery. It also belongs to the Marion Nollens.

The next three works are related to one another in size and handling. Gerhard signed two of them with his monogram, and in a sense all three are dated because the stretcher frames holding the canvas are connected at the corners with metal joints that bear the patent date of 1883. All three are predominantly brown in hue. The first two fall into the popular handling of landscape. The figures are engaged in cow herding and boating. The first³⁰ is found in the Pella Historical Society. He used an electric green to highlight the foliage. The second (not shown) belongs to Myron Nollen's family. The green appears again in the grass. The third³¹ is related in size but the focus on



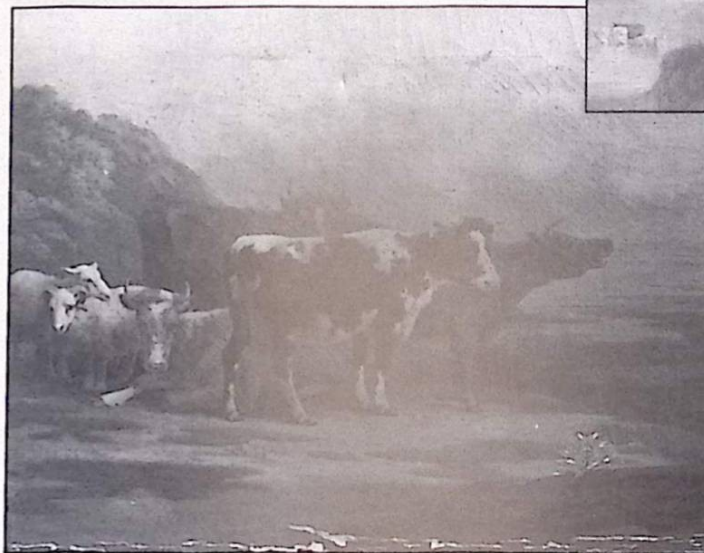
29 Landscape, with lake



28 Landscape, with pine trees



30 Landscape, cattle herding



31 Cows



32 Pastoral Scene

the cows is definitely inspired by the work of Albert Cuyp or Paulus Potter.

The final group of landscapes bear no dates. I would place the first three large (approximately 32" by 40") paintings earlier than the previous "dated" landscapes because they are more colorful, like his early portraits. The first³² of this group is an idyllic pastoral scene which belongs to Paul Nollen. The figures are said to be either portraits of Gerhard and one of his sisters or a portrait of Gerhard and an ex-girlfriend that one of his friends

stole from him. The scene suggests a nostalgic remembrance of the Netherlands because there is a windmill in the background, and the church bears some similarity to the church that stands in Didam. The fact that the details of the church tower are not exact suggests reliance on memory. The second large landscape³³ belongs to Herman and Opal Nollen. In this work the impasto treatment of the bark and foliage is extensively



33 *Landscape, with two boys*

developed. The obvious focus on nature and diminutive scale of the two boys definitely reflects the romantic in Gerhard. The third work belongs to Viola Vermeer. The treatment of the trees is much less painterly and more detailed. It is closer to the style of painters such as Johann Bernard Klombeck and Cornelis Koekkoek who were in the Netherlands when Gerhard was in school. [The photograph of this painting is missing from the collection].

The final three landscapes are owned by Mrs. C. B. Welle (these are not shown). She's a descendant of the family with which Gerhard was living when he died. For this reason I believe her landscapes number among his latest works. They are all the same size and painted on muslin which has become very brittle. The first is said to be a view of the Welle farm but the family agrees that is a rather fanciful view. The bright spring green is a dominant element in this piece. The last two are monochromes. I have no idea why he chose to paint this way. They are not night scenes. Perhaps he was feeling melancholy or simply ran out of paint.

To complete the overview of his artistic activity here are the few examples of his other works: the copy of Raphael's Sistine Madonna³⁴ belongs to Hazel Veith, a descendant of J. H. Emerson, Nollen's first employer in Keokuk. Nollen probably painted this as a favor or a gift. He has altered the original by replacing the curtain that framed the figures with an archway. The painting of Jesus among the Elders of the Temple belongs to the Welles family and was probably the result of a personal request for a copy. [The photograph of this painting is missing.]

The next painting of a young girl tending some sheep³⁵ belongs to

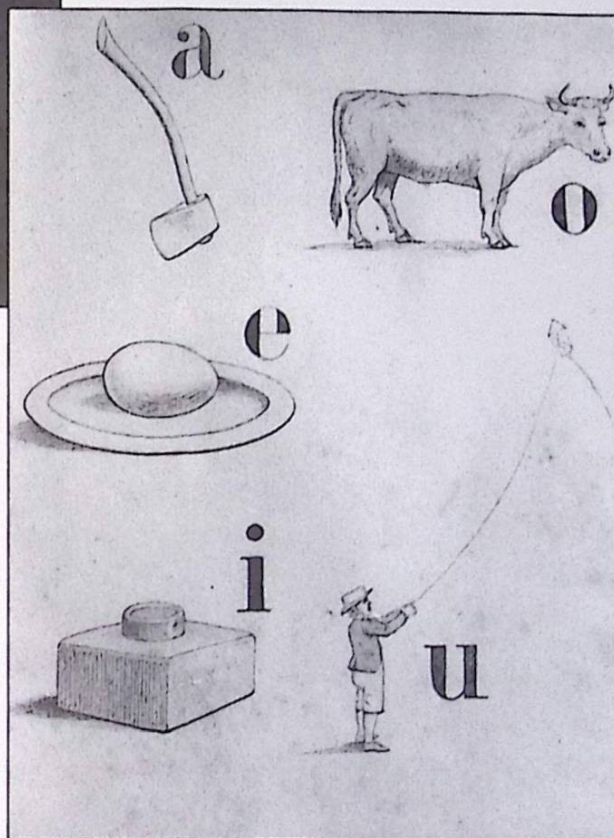
34 *Raphael's Sistine Madonna*
(Schilder Nollen's copy of)



35 *Tending Sheep*



36 *Angels*



37 *From Jan Nollen's primer*

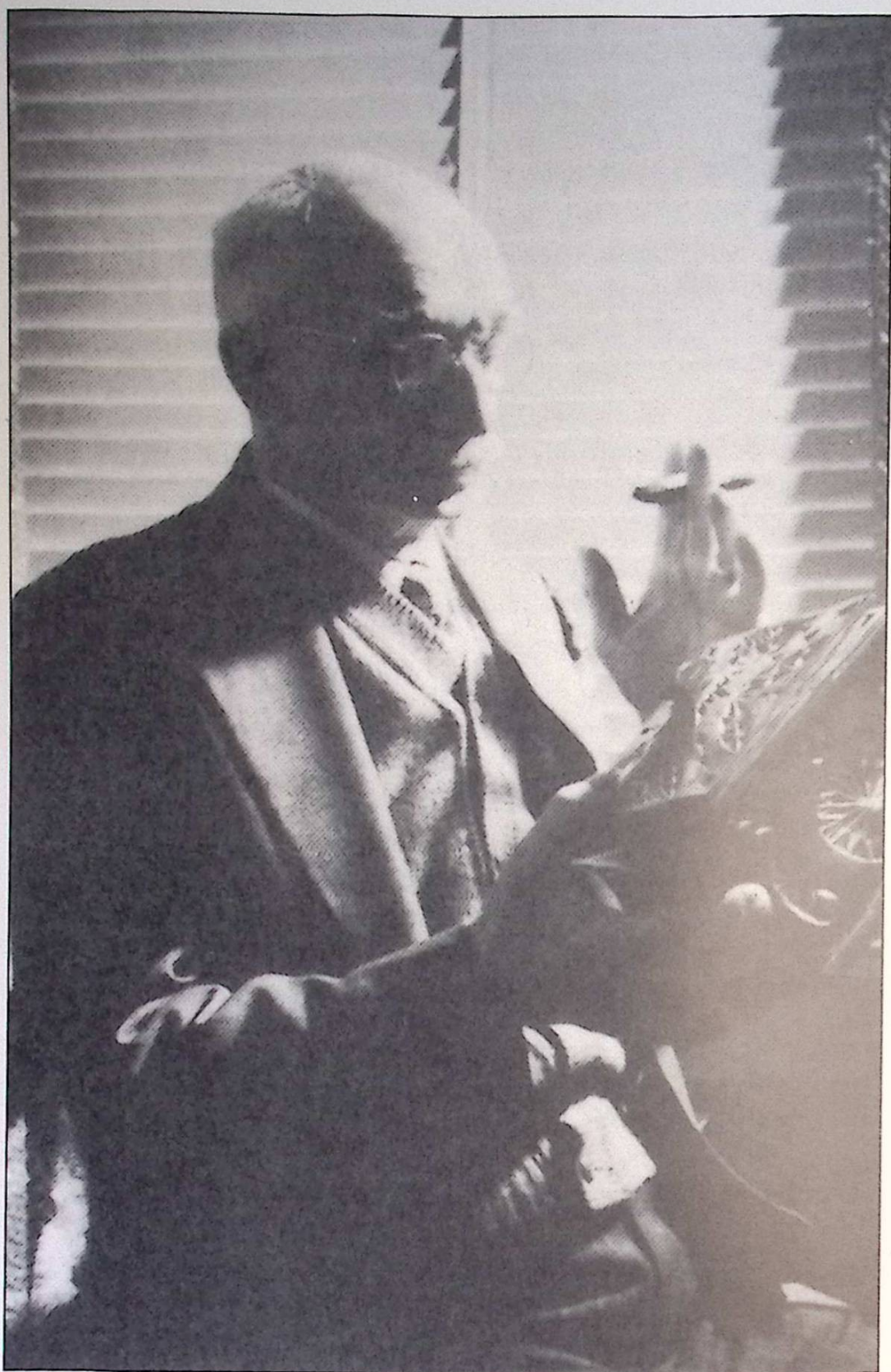
Dorothy and Marion Nollen. The "close-up" view of the subject is not typical of Gerhard and the monochrome coloring leads me to think this work may have been painted from a print that someone liked well.

The painting of angels³⁶ is not taken from any specific work, but it is interesting because two other oval paintings of angels are listed in Nollen's estate. He must have enjoyed painting angels in his later years. Finally there is a drawing from one of the primers he lettered and illustrated for his brother Jan.(see number 31) It includes the figure of a cow similar to those depicted in paintings.

At this stage I know that this collection of paintings does not represent Gerhard Nollen's total work. In his estate, twelve paintings are briefly described, and a few sketchbooks are mentioned. Only two works in the present group come close to these descriptions. The rest are hopefully still tucked away in attics. To this list can be added the numerous works he must have painted to earn a living while in Keokuk. Hopefully this initial study will inspire more searches.

This article was a Central College Honors Project from 1981, written under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Mills. Major sources included the Nollen Family Papers in the Central College Archives and Jan Nollen's "Tower of Babel." A full bibliography and full citations are with the original honors paper in the archives. A list of individuals interviewed includes: Mrs. Virgil Boot, Sully, Iowa; Mrs. Janna Bragg, Des Moines, Iowa; Mrs. Sara Kassander, Tuscon, Arizona; Mr. Carl Nollen, Runnells, Iowa; Mrs. John Nollen, Golden, Colorado; Dr. Paul Nollen, McComb, Illinois; Mrs. Joan Tyler, Newton, Iowa; Mrs. C. B. Welles, Lambs Grove, Iowa; Mayor Siebold, Mr. William Talbot, Mrs. Benjamin Van Weerden, Mrs. Hazel Veith, all from Keokuk, Iowa; Mrs. Lenore Hettinga, Mrs. Dorothy Nollen, Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Nollen, Mr. Herman Nollen, Mrs. Myron Nollen, Mrs. Viola Vermeer, all from Pella, Iowa. The photographs of the paintings were taken by the author and are presented courtesy of the Central College Art Department. They are now in the Central College Archives.

The editor asks the reader's patience regarding missing photographs of a few of Nollen's paintings. Also, because of the deterioration of the paintings, some are not shown. Of course, reproductions of the paintings and Georg Heeren's woodwork in the next article are not done in color, but I have left all references to color stand in the text to fulfill the authors' descriptive intentions.



Georg Heeren and cigar box

GEORG HEEREN: MASTER PELLA WOODWORKER

by Camille Sharp

When Georg Heeren learned the trade of woodworking in Holland as a young boy, he laid the foundation for what became a lifetime business, pastime, and passion. Heeren refined his skill as a wood worker, and in so doing, established a reputation that far preceded him. Once, on an episode of "Ripley's Believe It or Not," Ripley displayed a letter delivered to Heeren addressed simply: WOOD CARVER, IOWA. This was not to be the only testimony to Heeren's renowned ability. As a furniture maker, Heeren unwittingly made a memorial to himself through his life's work.

Georg Heeren was born in January of 1867 in Tenaard, a small village off the North Sea in the province of Friesland of the Netherlands. As the eldest of four children, three brothers and one sister, Georg received his grandfather's name. Georg's birth mother, a Spandau from Leeuwarden, passed away while Georg and his siblings were young. Shortly after her death, Georg's father, Roelof Heeren, remarried. On poor terms with their stepmother, Georg and the oldest of his brothers, Fred, left Tenaard to live in Amsterdam with their mother's brother, an intelligent and experienced ship's factor. Being in the shipping business, he required everyone in his household to speak a different language every day of the week. This situation did not sit well with Georg, as he only learned and spoke Dutch, German and Friesian. Friesian is not merely a dialect of Dutch, it is a language that sounds similar to the Anglo-Saxon Chaucer used in his writings. Georg's brother, Fred, on the contrary, learned to speak fluently in seven different languages, attributing this fluency to his career as an international patent attorney.

Georg learned the trade of woodworking as a young boy in Holland, and before coming to America with his friend Herman Jaarsma, he apprenticed in Germany. In 1889, Heeren and Jaarsma, traveled across the Atlantic Ocean together with Chicago as their destination. Once they arrived in New York, they embarked on a two-day trip by railroad to the Midwestern city. Before departing for the United States, Heeren had already made arrangements for a fellow Dutchman to meet him once he reached Chicago, and this man now prepared a place for Heeren to live in the city. Since the two men did not know each other by appearance, Georg carried a red handkerchief off the train, a signal of his identity to the unseen companion he met at the station that day.

Jaarsma, a baker, soon went on to Pella and opened what is the present day Jaarsma's Bakery. Remaining in Chicago, Georg began work immediately as the booming economy and growing need for housing demanded his skill as a draftsman. Heeren found employment at a mill work company where he designed the scroll work used in decorating porticoes on houses and commercial buildings. This detailed work consisted of spools and turned wood carvings which, when combined, created lattice work. A very creative and

skillful draftsman, Heeren could draft pictures of things that didn't exist. Customers would place orders and Georg would design something from scratch, according to their requests. This, as well as other drawings, were then used in the company catalogs.

During his time in Chicago, Georg met and married his wife, Sophie, also a Friesland native, who admired Georg and his work very much. At every opportunity she would show off Georg's fine craftsmanship and praise him for his ability. Georg's nephew, John Heeren, remembers that when he and his family visited their home Sophie would draw their attention to Georg's work and say, "Is het niet mooi?" (Isn't it beautiful?), "mijn Georg heest dat gemaakt" (My Georg made that). While they were living in Chicago, Georg and Sophie had a son whom they named Roelof, after Georg's father.

Heeren and his friend, with whom he journeyed to America, kept in touch despite the distance and the eleven years that subsequently elapsed after their arrival in this country. Due to commotion and riots caused by the activity of labor unions in Chicago, Georg, Sophie and their young son, Roelof, decided to join Georg's friend, Jaarsma, in Pella.

Upon arrival in 1900, Heeren rented a home on Washington Street and made his first place of operation in a building south of the then-present Bloomer's Mill. At the time Heeren began his first shop, the economy was booming and marked a period of expansion as a result of the influx of immigrants. Settlers were building communities and these communities often centered around churches. Colonists needed to furnish their churches and Heeren knew how to do it. Consequently, church pews comprised the primary product to come out of the early years of Georg's shop. Due to their size and the amount required of an order to fill a church, Georg quickly ran out of space to store them, even though he stored them vertically on one end. Since expansion was inevitable, Georg moved from that location and purchased the property at 901 Washington in 1901. The front of the lot contained a log cabin made of black walnut logs while the back temporarily housed his second shop in a barn which was attached by a gang-way in a layout called head-neck-and-shoulders. Heeren's friend Jaarsma ran the bakery still located today on Franklin Street in Pella, which was another similar head-neck-and-shoulders layout typical of that time, but since improved upon.



Home of Georg Heeren

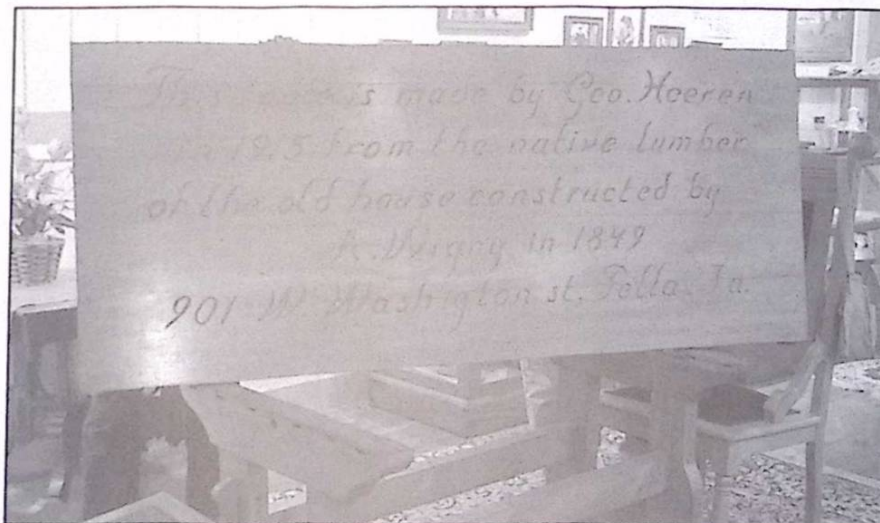
Heeren bought his property and buildings from A. Wigny, one of the original leaders of the colonization movement in Pella. Shortly after relocating, Georg wrecked the barn to make room for a more spacious shop, and as the demands of business continued to grow, it proved necessary to enlarge the building at three different times. Heeren's grandson and namesake, Georg

Heeren, Jr., remembers his grandfather as an innovator: "He always had a lot of bright ideas." When Heeren built the new shop, he constructed a bow-string truss building. It was one of the only buildings of its kind in that area of the country at that time. The building featured a domed roof with no central supports; therefore the load was carried on the outside walls. Since the foundation lacked the strength to bear the weight of the walls and roof, the walls sank into the ground. Consequently, the floor sloped down from the center toward all sides of the building.

A steam engine powered all of the machinery in the shop. Pulleys that hung to the floor attached to the machines, connecting them to the line shaft that ran the length of the building. All of the machinery shared this common power source. Georg, Jr. recalls his progressive grandfather always liking new things. So, as the years passed and the advancement of technology allowed, Heeren powered his equipment by gas engine. Eventually, during the late Thirties, Georg began to modernize by purchasing machinery integrated with individual electric motors.

In 1915, Heeren reduced the original log cabin to wreckage, but salvaged much of the wood, some of which became kindling, but most of it Heeren used in his work. From these precious black walnut logs, Heeren built a dining room table as well as various pieces of furniture consisting of coffee tables, chairs, and bedroom suites which Heeren used in his home. The dining room table bears an inscription of the wood's pedigree:

This table is made by Geo. Heeren
in 1915 from the native lumber
of the old house constructed by
A. Wigny in 1849
901 W. Washington St. Pella. Ia.



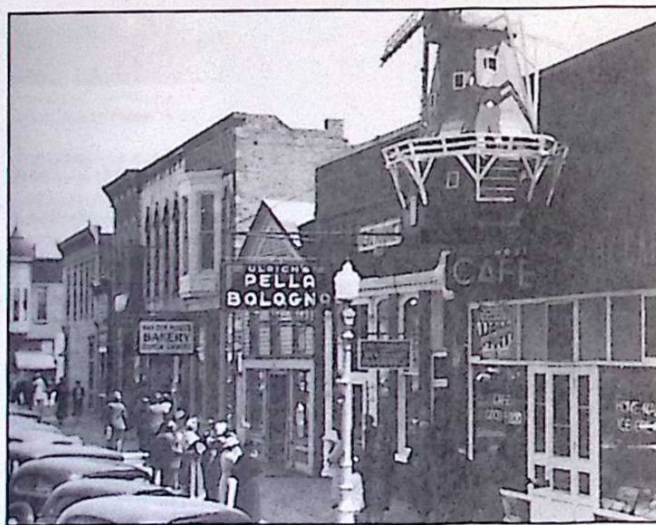
The table is now on display at the Pella Historical Society Village.

Along with the expansion of Heeren's business in Pella, his family also began to grow. Georg and Sophie had three children. Roelof (known as Rudy) was born in Chicago, before their move to Pella. Jessie and Jacob were born

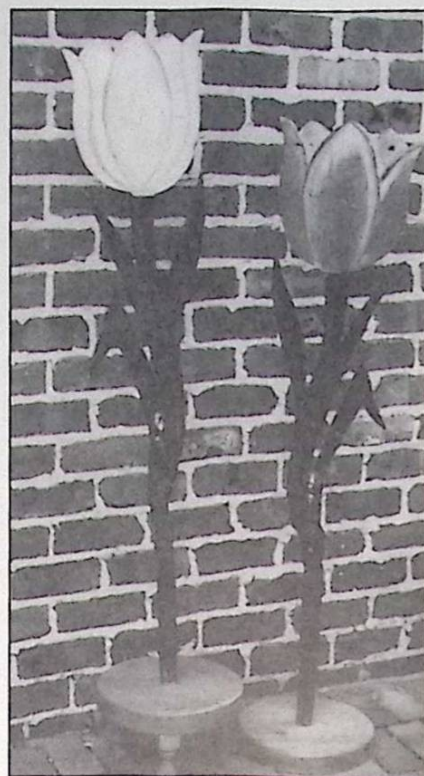
in Pella, but unfortunately, Jacob died at the age of seventeen from tuberculosis. Rudy married Anna Crum and the two of them had four children: Georg, Jr., Guysbert, Sophie, and Cora. Jessie married Pella farmer, Ed Tysseling. They had no children.

In Pella, Georg played a very active role in the Friesian community. Before the establishment of Tulip Time, the Frese Dutch, many of whom had settled in Pella, would gather in Grundman's grove, near the Skunk River north of town, for annual picnics. Georg, Jr. remembers Tulip Time having its antecedent in these Friesian picnics, for his grandfather had a profound interest in the organization and beginnings of Tulip Time. Upon considering to hold such a celebration, a committee traveled to Holland, Michigan to see how they organized their festival. Borrowing some of their ideas, Pella held its first Tulip Time celebration in 1935. At the time the city made the decision to establish this annual tradition, not enough time remained for the tulips to grow before the festival. Heeren remedied this by crafting one hundred twenty-five wooden tulips about four feet in height. The flag display sockets that bordered the square held the shaft of the wood flowers, and so Pella's first tulip lanes had an unnatural beginning.

Along with the tulips, Heeren also made all of the windmills which ornamented the city in those days. The largest one was located in West Market Park, while another was mounted over the entrance to Central Park Cafe. Additionally, for one of the early Tulip Times, Heeren wanted to reconstruct an image of his homeland. Over the years, he had collected postcards



1935 First Tulip Time – South side of square, note Heeren windmill.



Two of the original wooden tulips made by Georg Heeren in 1935.

of memorable buildings from his youth in Holland. He now used these pictures to make the Dutch Village in miniature, which is still on display at the Pella Historical Society. All of the model buildings have at one time been actual places in Holland cities or in the rural areas. Heeren originally displayed the village on the second level of the American Legion Hall. He and others have added to, updated, and expanded it since Heeren began the project in 1938, and it has now grown into an

enormous village. Georg, Jr., his brother Guysbert, and their cousin John, all remember working on the Dutch Village with their grandfather, John recalling that:

It had windmills pumping water through the canals. It was very life-like. One evening, on the first year of its existence, my cousin Georg and I poured a package of soap suds into it. It really didn't froth the way we had expected it to, but it did foam up a little bit. Uncle Georg was mad as a wet hen, but we have since been forgiven for it by now, I hope.

Heeren also served on the parade committees for the early Tulip Time celebrations. For these parades he crafted the original scissor sharpening cart and turn-table float used to display the traditional Dutch regional dress.



Georg, Jr. worked in the shop for several years, learning about running the machinery and other basic processes. He and his brother and cousin would do odd

**Herren's Miniature
Dutch Village**



jobs around the shop such as sweeping or stripping the finish off of old pieces of furniture that Georg was going to refurbish. Georg, Jr. recalls working in the shop for ten hours a day, making a mere twenty cents an hour. Two dollars a day does not seem like much, but Cousin John remembers the wages as being helpful during the years of the depression. Georg, Jr. thought of his grandfather's shop as an interesting place to go, and he avidly learned how things worked in that business. Certainly his grandfather actively shared his enthusiasm about his trade as a cabinet maker.





Dutch Cart

Conversely, Georg, Jr. remembers his grandfather as a very poor businessman who hated bookkeeping. John Heeren remembers visiting in Pella at the time it became mandatory that all businesses and most families had to file income tax reports. Georg's method of business was such that if he had money in his pocket, business was good. If there was not much money in his pocket, business was bad. When this mandatory income tax reporting came into effect, "he hit the ceiling!" remembers John Heeren. Georg, Jr. helped him start a bookkeeping system, but grandfather fought him all the way.

What Heeren may have lacked in interest for business and bookkeeping, he more than compensated for through his ability as a wood worker. Heeren's work incorporated more than cabinetmaking.

The products that came out of Georg's shop varied and often reflected his many interests. He used to make custom furniture for individuals who saved the lumber from old trees on their farms or homesteads. On one occasion, he made a bedroom suite from an old walnut tree that one of his clients had cut down and stored in a creek for a long period of time in order to dissolve the sap from it. Another time he turned out a cane from an old fence post for a man who reported it as the first fence post his father had hewn when he settled in this country.

The facile furniture craftsman also created two-dimensional works like the wood inlay picture of a woman's head, which he named *The Gibson Girl*. In the days that he made it, a certain calendar came out every year which always pictured a beautiful girl dressed in a bathing costume. A lumber company hired a man named Gibson to paint the images, hence the name *The Gibson Girl*. The lumber company used the calendars as an advertisement every year. John Heeren, who still owns one of the carved images remembers:



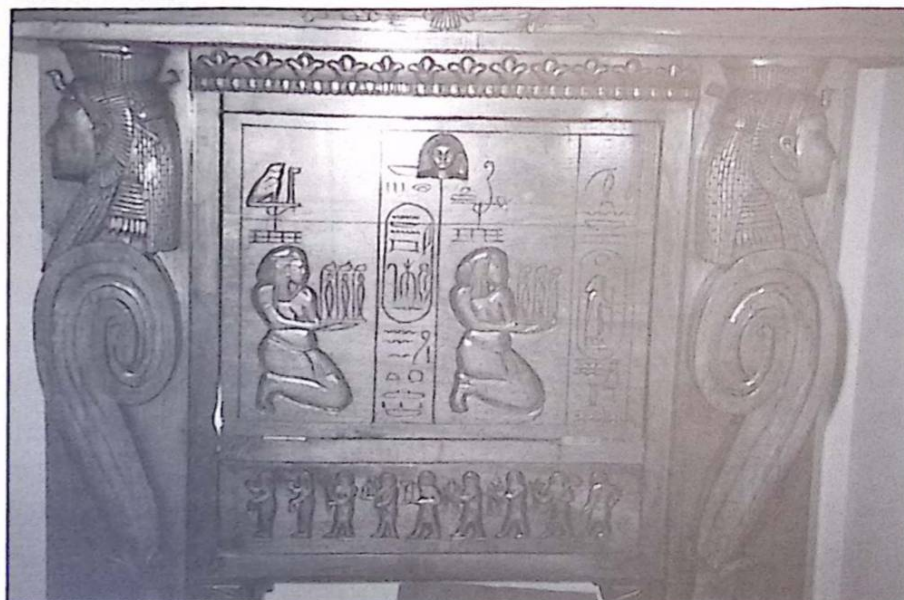
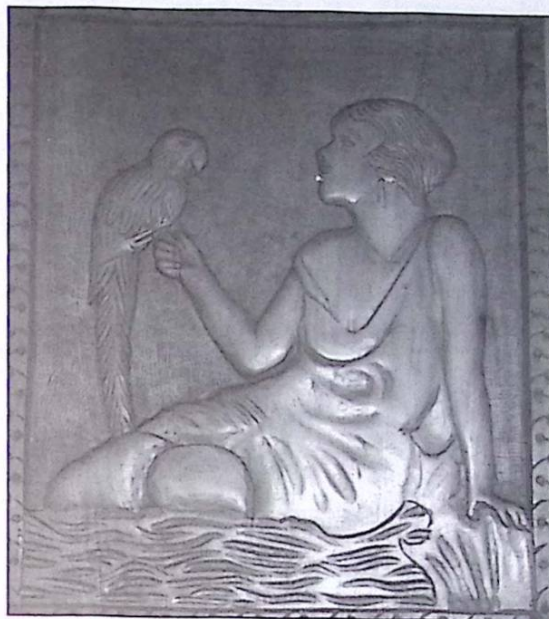
Georg liked to make plaques with carved patterns and pictures on them. One of these represents a couple in Holland receiving a letter from their children who had gone to America. It stood in our dining room for years and we kids started using it for a dart board. In the late forties, upon returning from the service, I resurrected it from our basement and it looked pretty sad having turned almost black. My love for my uncle Georg caused me to clean it up, but it still didn't look too good. So, I gave it a coat of enamel then rubbed burnt umber into it. It now looks great, but I still wonder what Uncle Georg would think of my departure from the way he designed it.

Georg designed his living room set with an Egyptian theme during the time of the 1920s King Tut rage in the United States and after having seen the exhibition of Tutankhamen's treasures. This exhibition inspired the production of a set of parlor room furniture, including a plush sofa and chairs with carvings shaped like the head and legs of the sphinx. The frames of the furniture also displayed intricate carvings of Egyptian symbols and images. The silver cabinet (see cover) had a glass top and sides to showcase the family silver pieces. Heeren also made a rocking chair, radio cabinet, and a massive jewelry case also designed in the Egyptian fashion.

Georg passed the Egyptian furniture on to his daughter, Jessie Tysseling, but upon her death her estate was auctioned off. The silver cabinet now belongs to the collection at the Pella Historical Society.

Prior to his Egyptian phase, Heeren built a phonograph designed after a whisky barrel standing upright. He built storage for the records out of a

smaller barrel laying next to it. One could select a record by pulling out the spout which exposed the records in an organized, vertical fashion. Heeren also inlaid the floor of his living room and dining room with different colored woods in an intricate geometric pattern of blocks, much resembling the block counting that the military used when men took the intelligence

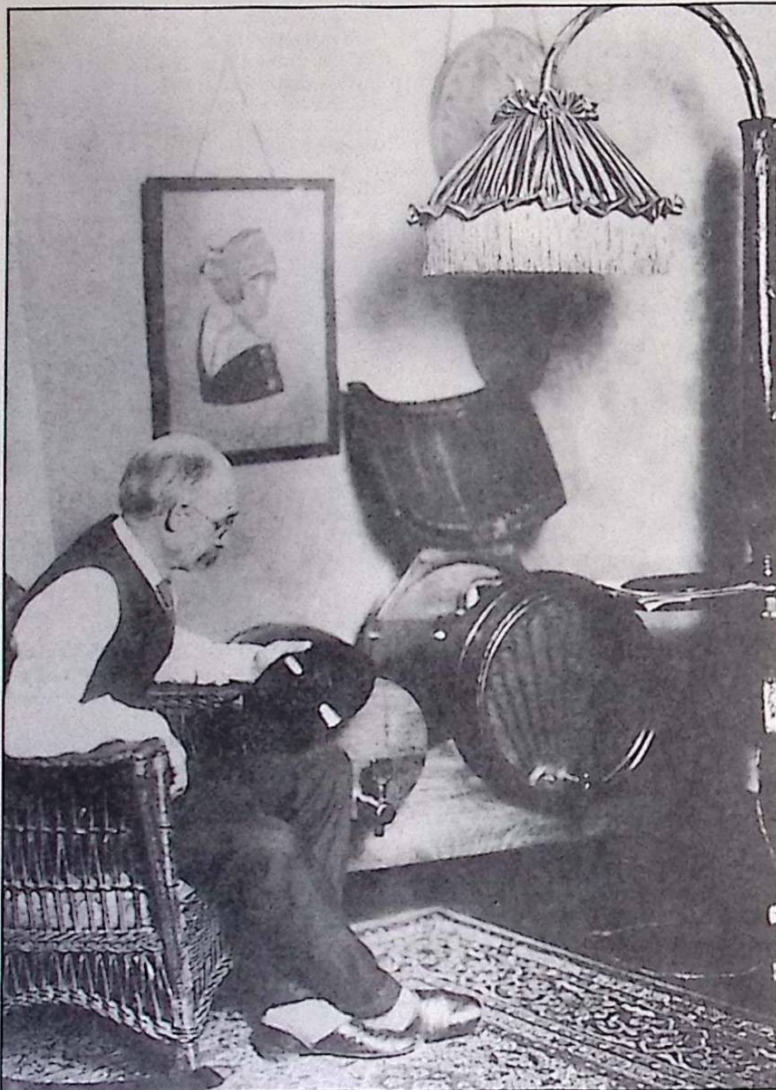


tests upon entering the service. George went on to create similar custom woodworking objects and designs for additional homes in Pella.

A friend of Ding Darling, the cartoonist for the Des Moines *Register*, Georg enjoyed his cartoons and carved low reliefs of some of them. His favorite was the cartoon Darling produced upon the death of Teddy Roosevelt and in his version Darling did a take off of the painting entitled, *The End of the Trail*, that pictured an Indian upon a horse, both with their heads hanging. The Indian had a spear in his arms pointing toward the earth. Darling pictured Roosevelt in the place of the Indian. Heeren carved the image in low relief.



Detail from
silver cabinet



Georg Heeren with
some of the things he
made. The Gibson Girl
picture on the wall is
of inlaid woods. The
two items appearing to
be casks were actually
a record holder and
ornate phonograph.
The lamp was also his
design

Over the years, Georg lost a few fingers, although in those days this constituted a common hazard for cabinet makers and wood workers. However, Heeren did not let this hinder him. He took on contracts for trimming and equipping many churches—all the way from the doors to the pulpits and pews. Moreover, he did most of the tedious jobs for Rolscreen Company.

Often they needed reproductions of blinds, screens and even pieces of furniture for Rolscreen's customers. This always entailed specific, custom work, and he always tackled such projects successfully. John Heeren remembers:

I have spent many and many thoughtful and gainful hours in Uncle Georg's shop watching him turn out so many interesting things. On my vacations and when I attended Central College, I would stop in at the shop. Watching him turn out things on his lathe was an education in itself. I learned a great deal about the cabinet and craft work there. I received good head knowledge, but never did any of the work myself. One thing I did there was cane chairs. He paid me about three dollars per chair each of which took a couple of weeks to accomplish. I remember him making a knee hole desk for my aunt, Lila Blommers. It was a beautiful desk and I swore I'd make one like it one day but never did.

As an innovator, Heeren conceived bright ideas and shared them, unselfishly disseminating his knowledge and skill about woodworking. Georg, Jr. felt privileged to learn a lot about the processes involved with woodworking by observing his ingenious grandfather creating in the shop.

The wood came from the mill unrefined. When it arrived in the shop, Heeren would cut the lumber down to a rough shape. Before he ran it over the jointer to flatten one side, he would first look to see which way the board was bowed to ensure a flat surface. Heeren would then run it through a thickness planer to cut off the irregularities and give specific thickness to the piece of wood. He then ran the edge of the board through the jointer again. Next, Heeren would square up the stock and put moldings on it, first putting the molding through shapers to give them curved edges. Georg also did a lot of spool turning, or lathe work, in his factory. Spool turning was originally called this because the primitive method involved saving old spools, stacking, and then securing them with a rod down through the center. Additionally, Georg created a lot of raised panel doors, cutting them with raised panel cutters which cut out the "river" around the center panel. The order of construction for a chair was: back first, then the arms, rails, and legs. Heeren and his employees did some veneering work at the shop as well, a process involving laying a thin sheet of exotic wood over the cheaper base wood.

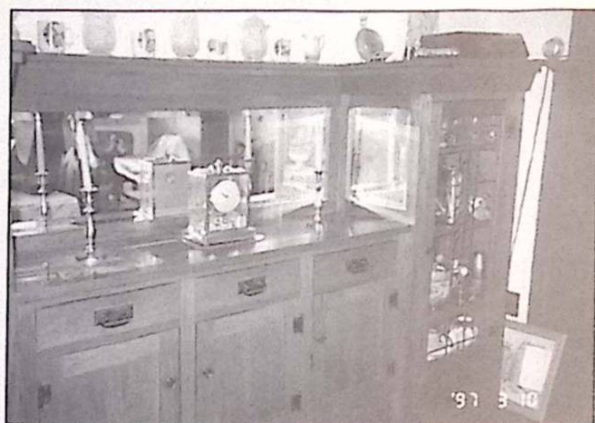
While Georg fashioned a lot of Chippendale style furniture, the orders that came into the shop most frequently called for church pews. Requests for Heeren's work typically came in from the area surrounding Pella, encompassing Des Moines, Ames, Iowa Falls, Marshalltown, Oskaloosa and other towns. Heeren found that a great demand existed for furniture that the shop was capable of turning out, and that more people had turned to the old-fashioned styles of furniture. However, Georg's work with household furniture dealt mainly with repairs in the early years of the shop, for the immigrants who had recently moved to Pella did not have the money to buy new furniture.

In his earlier days in Pella, Georg sculpted The Corn Dollar, a replica

of a silver dollar made entirely of corn kernels. It spanned between four and five feet in diameter, stood about six feet tall including its stand, and consisted of kernels of corn of different natural colors with their head ends facing the surface. The work represented a political implication, allegedly having something to do with William Jennings Bryan's silver policy. Heeren also made a carved replica of the Statue of Liberty, and he was working on a full relief, life-size caricature of The Iowa Farmer to be executed in corn in much the same way he had done The Corn Dollar when his wife died. He quit working on it then, however, and after Sophie's death in 1931, Heeren ceased producing his solely artistic works.



Heeren made each of his grandchildren a carved coffee table at the time of their marriages. He constructed one for Georg, Jr. in 1946 of walnut, his preferred wood because it possessed a firm texture and a nice color. Heeren would often stamp his finished work with either a "G" or "Geo.,"



Some of Georg Herren's cabinet work

resorting to these abbreviations because he would often get frustrated when others would spell his name with an "e" on the end of Georg. Among other carved pieces were Georg's Chippendale and Rose-back style chairs. These styles were not original to his shop; they were reproductions. Heeren's 1930s shop included a planer, rip saw, cross cut saw, jointer, band saw, jig saw, boring machine, sander, and electric driven machinery. Some of Heeren's employees over the years were: J. Hesselink, who learned his trade in Georg's shop, William Michmershuizen (Billy Mic) who was a painter and wood worker, and Frank Kester. Rudy Heeren, Georg's son, eventually took over the shop and its contents in the late thirties.

Heeren exemplified an artist whose first medium was wood. A skilled woodworker and designer, his strengths didn't begin and end there, however, Heeren also enjoyed painting Dutch scenes and windmills in his free time. Too, Heeren participated as an active community leader, serving on many parade float committees as well as the park commission for several years.

People today are enamored with Heeren's work, but back then Georg just took it as a matter of course and didn't think much of it. He remained an artist and a craftsman, a proud Dutchman and a dedicated American. Georg Heeren died in 1960.

Sources and Acknowledgments:

The author would like to thank the following people for sharing their knowledge of Heeren and for allowing access to his work for photographs: James and Viretta Wisse, Ed and Barbara DeJong, Ralph and Elaine Jaarsma, Melvin and Ruth Brummel, and Georg Heeren, Jr.

The major sources for this article have been phone interviews and personal interviews in Saint Paul, Minnesota, with Georg Heeren, Jr., and letters to the author from John Heeren all done in January through April 1997. Georg Heeren, Jr. was not officially a "junior," but he used the designation for convenience in business, legal, and financial affairs. Sadly, while this booklet was being prepared in the summer of 1997, Georg passed away in St. Paul. To him, who facilitated this article, this volume is dedicated.

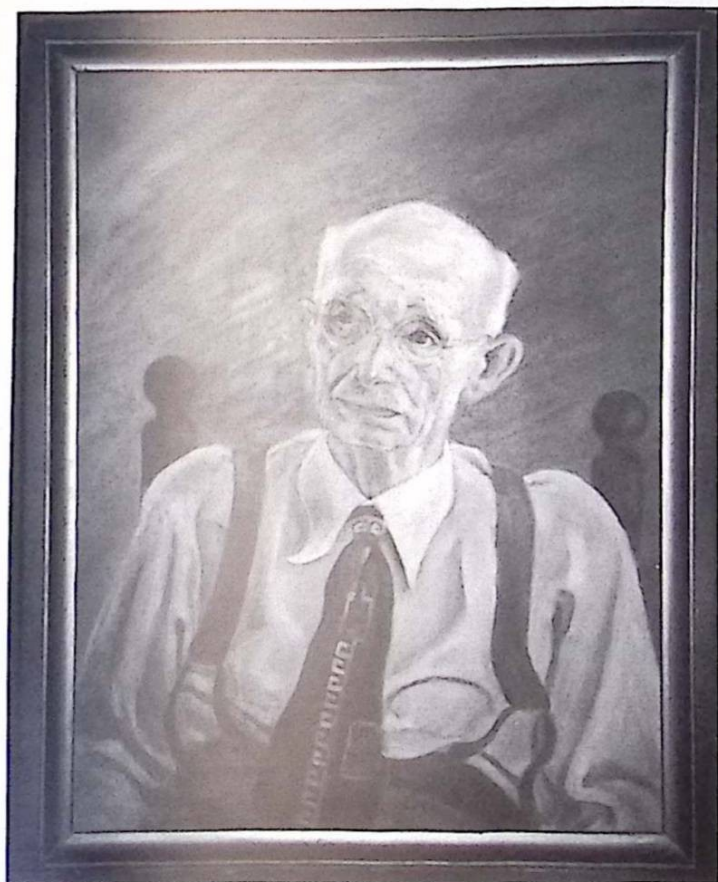
The author would also like to extend thanks to Dr. James E. McMillan of the Central College History Department for recommending and advising on this independent research project.

The photos of the inscribed table, the Dutch village, and the chair were taken by Mary Roozeboom of Rose Tree Photography Studios. My thanks to her for her contribution. The photos of Georg and cigar box, the Heeren home, the windmill and the record player, and the float are from The History of Pella, 1847-1987. The remainder of the Heeren photographs were taken by myself.

C.S.

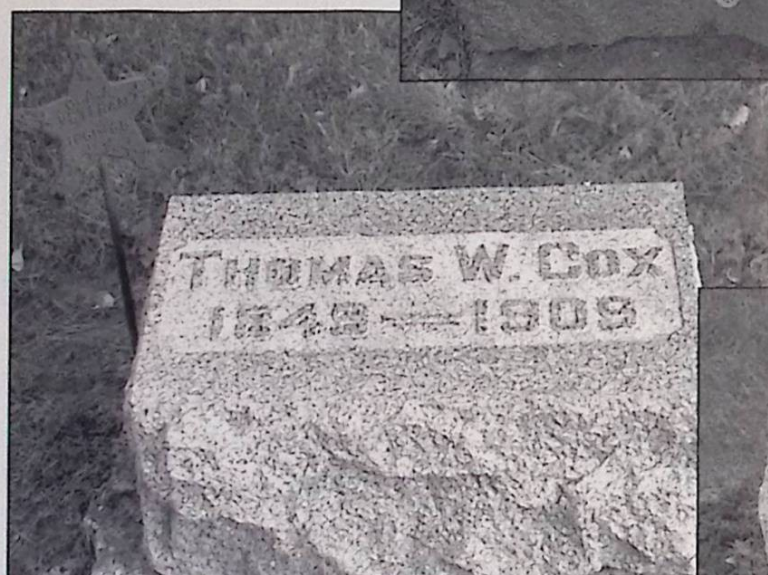
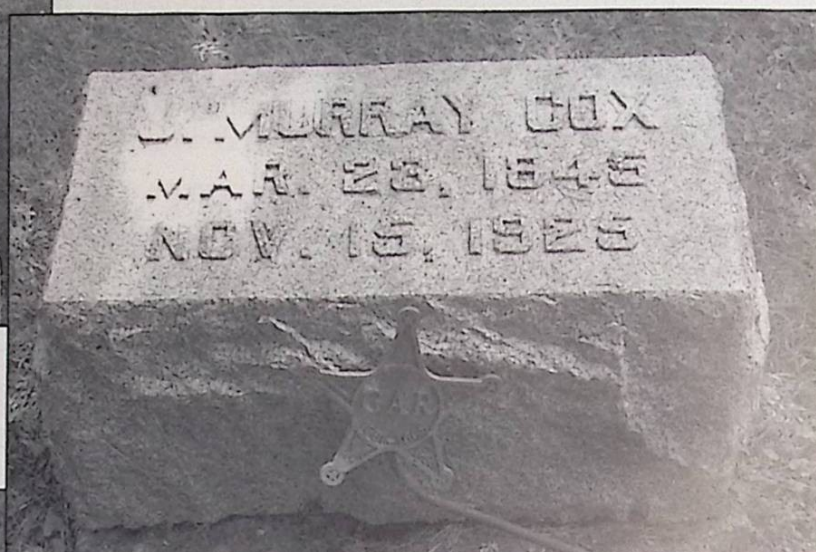
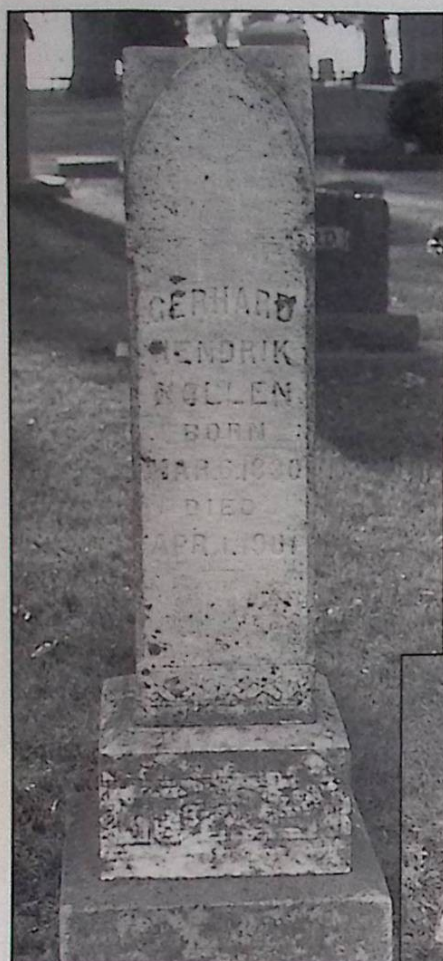



**75th Anniversary float
made by Georg Herren.**



Georg Heeren 1867-1960

*Nollen, Heeren and
the Coxs rest together
now in Pella's
Oakwood Cemetery*





DEDICATED
TO

JAMES MURRAY COX

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS
SERVICES AS BAND MASTER
WAR OF THE REBELLION
1861-1865



MANAGER OF
COX LIGHT INFANTRY BAND
PELLA IOWA
1881-1911